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BY

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SERMON I.

MODERN SCEPTICISM; HOW IT SHOULD BE MET.

"And he marvelled because of their unbelief." — MARK vi. 6.

I WISH to speak to you this evening touching the relation of Christianity to unbelief; not the unbelief of the Jews, but the unbelief of Americans, — the unbelief of New England. Men say that scepticism is on the increase. I doubt it myself. I think that error has seen its best estate in our country, — that it has reached, especially here in New England, its highest flood-mark. Its current henceforth will shrink, not swell; it is already on the ebb. The causes of this decline are many and evident. I cannot now enumerate them. I will only say, in brief, that error at the start in this State was fortunate in two things: first, its leadership, — it could show a wonderful array of great names in its support; and, second, it was fortunate in the peculiar circumstances and conditions of the public mind. Neither of these advantages belong to it to-day. It is weak in great names. It is weaker yet in the conditions of the age, which is

positive, and cannot applaud a negative philosophy, religion, or political theory. The Christian religion is therefore, as I look at it, about to reap its heaviest harvest and win its grandest victory. Everything so far is hopeful; but everything is in a state of transition, nothing is assured. Everything may be lost. Inactivity will lose it; mismanagement of the moral forces at our disposal will lose it. We need to make every possible effort to impress upon the country at large and people individually the value and blessedness of religion. The masses must be made acquainted with a saving faith, must be confirmed in their adherence to firm, conservative habits and principles, or all is lost. Unbelief will destroy us if it be allowed to spread and become the fashion of the land.

One of the first and most pressing things to do is to make everybody see and feel the strength of Christianity and the radical weakness of scepticism. I propose, in the few moments I have to devote to discussion, to contrast the two, and assist you to a correct estimate of those spiritual forces given of God in his mercy to man, but which become operative only so far as they are received into willing hearts.

One thing we must not forget, namely, that Christianity is a fact. Its philosophy is thought out; its ethics are promulgated; its moralities are reduced to practice; its predictions are fulfilled.

Any objection urged against it is to be regarded as an objection urged against an established system. This is the vantage-ground that the Christian religion holds over scepticism. If one could live in a vacuum he might doubt that there was any such thing as wind, and persuade his scepticism off upon others; but he would find it exceedingly difficult to do this when he stood with a current blowing against his cheek and among those who lived in the open air. Well, Christianity, like the wind, is its own proof; it bears testimony of itself, and yet its testimony is true. It is seen in its effects. Its results are patent to all, and no objection can stand which ignores the powerful existence of what it condemns. The presence of apples in the markets proves that there must be orchards.

Indeed, religion has become so intimately interwoven with the people's life, so embodied in our institutions, it exists so little in its abstract forms and so fully in its concrete, that in one sense no objection can be brought against it. To bring an objection against Christianity you must object to the civilization it has nourished, to the political structure it has raised up, and to the character of the people whom it has educated and inspired. You cannot separate the tree from the fruit, the stream from the fountain, the fragrance from the flower. They stand or fall together. The blow aimed at the one hits both; their censure and praise

are alike. The sceptics of this city, when they attack the religion of New England, attack New England herself. Every sneer against piety is a sneer against your characters and mine, fellow-citizens; as it is against every character inspired at all by religious impulses. For where and when is the religion of a people seen? Is it seen in their creeds, their verbal statements of truth, their catechisms and sacred books alone? I tell you nay. The religion of a people is seen and judged in the character of the people itself; it is advertised in their laws, manifested in their habits, exemplified in their homes, published in their civil institutions, engrossed in the records of their jurisprudence. If you would see religion, to judge of her, go not to the churches only, look not at creeds and sermons; go forth to fields and shops and stores and factories; behold her in the action of a thousand industries which she makes possible and directs; enter the court of justice, and see her in laws honestly administered; pass to the legislature, and behold her in the formation of statutes whose object is to equalize the burdens and protect the rights of all; go down to the crowded mart where men buy and sell, and realize her presence in the protection of property, in the rectitude of individual characters; visit the homes of New England, and see her in the loves, the sanctities, the joys of parents and children; —

for in such places and things is the religion of a people really manifested. It is against these, the blessed results of Christianity, that all enmity to Christianity is to-day addressed. Whoever soils the fountain pollutes the stream; whoever attacks religion makes war upon the results of religion. To sneer at piety is to sneer at that order of life, that class of habits, that honorable character, which it produces.

This is what makes all error dangerous, and all irreverence deadly. I care nothing about the war which error may wage upon words; words are valueless save as they aid us to popularize needed ideas. But when war is made upon religion itself; when we see that the animus of the endeavor is not to improve the definition of terms, — not to revive an impotent truth, rendered so by an unfortunate expression, — not to teach a higher scholarship, but to make all scholarship useless, — then alarm is legitimate and counter-attack is called for.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, this is the true state of the case as regards many of our modern sceptics and opponents of religion. Their effort is not to improve the verbal and actual expression of religion, but to wipe out all religion. They hate it with the hatred which the carnal mind always feels toward spiritual forces and results. Their highest, their only, conception of intellectual liberty seems to be a general incredulity. They

insist that flight is impossible save in a vacuum. Faith they associate with ignorance. They cannot conceive of a devout scholarship. The graduates of Harvard — I am sorry to say it — come forth and prove their erudition by writing essays to disprove the very impulse, to throw discredit upon the very faith in God and regard for man, which originated and for more than a century nourished their university. The piety which gave birth to Harvard is discredited at Harvard. The daughter denies that she ever had a mother.

I maintain that a scholarship which denies more than it asserts, nay, whose very assertions are denials, is an imbecile scholarship. It would be wicked if it was not so weak. To be strong, a mind must be constructive. It must build, it must elaborate, it must fuse and unite. Coherence is essential to dignity. The power of God is shown in orderly creation, in worlds made and wisely governed, in planets directed, in systems adjusted and impelled, and in those vast constructive processes of energy which stand as parents to the universe itself. The power of God is seen in this: He speaks, and laws spring into existence; He breathes upon chaos, and it becomes inhabitable: He lifts his hand, and the stars begin their endless march. This is God, and man born in his image stands united to him in analogy. True greatness, of whatever degree, is known by its creations. Its

accomplishments are positive. It adds to, instead of detracting from, the bulk of the world's faith and works.

I have shown you, I trust, young men, that religion cannot be disconnected from its results. Piety means character, not creed ; and every attack that is made upon piety is, in fact, made upon the character which it causes and which embodies it. The man who passes a dagger into my bosom stabs me. There is a true scepticism, — the scepticism which leads to investigation, which prompts wise inquiry, which searches for the truth as for a lost jewel, rejoicing when it has found it. That was the scepticism of Luther, — a scepticism which doubted the divinity of dead forms, of lifeless ceremony, of humanly invented tradition, and felt until it found and took to its bosom the warm, vital truth, and by the contact was warmed into faith. That was the scepticism of Thomas, — a scepticism which demanded only the needed measure of evidence, and when this was given blossomed, like a bud when it has received the needed ray, into perfect trust. Such doubters are God's best worshippers ; their confessions live with the life of history ; they glorify the Eternal Father. Such scepticism springs from the freedom of the human mind, and exists in harmony with a devout spirit. But the scepticism of to-day — at least, the larger part of it — is not of this kind. It ridicules forms, it is

true, but only that it may make the spirit they embody ridiculous. It laughs at creeds, but only that it may deride the everlasting truths they express. Its effort is not to improve the imperfect expression of religion, but to remove religion itself from the minds and hearts of its worshippers. This, I assert, is its tendency, its aim, its ambition. Its first phase is a mild scepticism; its second, infidelity; its third, atheism. It first doubts; it then disbelieves; and finally it blasphemes.

Such being its character and tendency, I warn all of you, I warn the public, against it. I pray God to keep all of you and the entire country from it. Had I the power, I would send my warning cry to every city, village, and hamlet of the land. It should ride the rising blast as the thunder-gust rides the gale, warning them to flee for shelter to the Rock which is greater than all human defence. Woe to New England in that day when she shall stand stripped of her ancestral faith; when the holy impulses of the fathers shall no longer swell in the bosom of her sons; when the sweet and solemn influences of heaven shall be withdrawn from us because of our unbelief; and the Holy Spirit depart, grieved away by the general frivolity and worldliness of the popular mind.

My friends, you may differ from me touching what may be called the technicalities of religion, —

touching forms and ceremonies, and the verbal rendering of truth ; on these points, I say, you may not agree with me. But I trust we all agree in this : that religion is necessary ; that it is essential to individual happiness and to society at large ; that from no other source than God's Holy Word can we derive those checks and restraints, those maxims and impulses, which anchor a people to comparative permanence and security ; and that without the presence of these in men's hearts and homes the country would descend in morality and decency with an ever-accelerating rapidity, until within the lives of only a few generations our land would become a den of thieves, — a den strewn with the bones of those slain by the outbreak of passions to which there would then be no restraint, and whose violence is seen only in barbarous lands. I know that some in this city call piety a delusion. Accept their definition, and what then ? It only proves that the most essential thing known to human government is a delusion. It only shows that the highest personal altitude, the most ambitious attempts of the intellect, the sweetest moods of the soul, the highest forms of heroism, and the widest humanity, all come to the mind and breast of man in the garb of a delusion. That is all their epithet proves. Hail, then, to a delusion so benevolent, so exalting, so satisfactory ! Hail to so sweet a deceit as this, which charms

away our troubles and makes our griefs tolerable! If virtue, if honor, if popular intelligence, if love for man, if a wise reverence for the Deity, — if these all spring from delusion, then is delusion better than reality, and vision preferable to fact. The graves where our fathers and mothers sleep are known to us, and the chambers from which their spirits passed will live in recollection with the life of memory. I turn these into testimony; I use them as illustration. I point you to the graves where those fathers repose. I hold up in tender vision before you the chambers where those mothers expired. How noble their lives, filled to the brim with honorable industries! how patient in disappointment, how cheerful in poverty, how energetic in health, how submissive in sickness! And when the hour to render up the account of their lives unto God had come, how calmly they laid their industries aside, how submissively they yielded to the stoppage of purpose and the interruption of plan! The summons which startles most found them prepared. They felt neither terror nor surprise. They passed from earth into heaven as naturally and calmly as a tide at the call of its father, the ocean, escapes from the pressure of the narrow banks and mingles its current with the waters of the mighty sea. So they passed up to God, sustained by faith in His Almighty Son. Can a delusion accomplish such a result?

The answer to the sceptic, then, is first found in the result of Christianity as seen in the maxims of justice, the humane impulses, the commercial integrity, the civil liberty, in short, in the beneficent civilization which distinguishes the country. And secondly, the answer to all his doubts is found in the way in which its disciples meet the supreme emergency of life. I point, then, first to the way in which its true disciples live ; and then, with more imperative gesture, I direct them to study the way in which they die.

Men say that the religious impulse is dying out ; that Christianity is in a state of decadence ; that the ancestral faith of New England is passing away. If this be true, then I say that the custodians of it are to blame. Then is the ministry as a body derelict. Then are those whose office it is to fan the historic flame, to keep alive the divine fire, to perpetuate a faith that can ennoble life and glorify death, — then are these, I say, faithless to their holy trust, or drained of their power. For what other orator can bring to the support of any cause such a history, to the discussion of any case such testimony, for the defence of any truth such a vindication, or for the conviction of the popular mind such a plea, as the preacher of the gospel in New England finds ready to his hand ? The missionary to heathen lands must preach a gospel unsupported by surrounding benefits, antagonistic to

the people's tradition, at variance with the habits and customs of the populace, and directly at variance with the political structure of the government, be it tribal or national. Even he who labors for Christ on the frontiers of our own country, the missionary in our new States, has few accessories to assist his preaching. The character which shall by and by vindicate Christianity in that place is yet to be formed. The civilization which shall, after a while, be its best argument, is yet in its elements; it has not crystallized into those diamond-like shapes of law and order, intelligence and culture, enterprise and wealth, which by and by shall proclaim to all its excellency. He argues, he exhorts, he prays, against such odds as no New England pastor knows. For here the arguments for Christianity are on every side and palpable to the eye. Her vindication is not found in books, but in everything which makes up the aggregate result of our two hundred years of life. The preachers of religion have only to point to the fields, redeemed from a wilderness state by the thrift she inculcated; to the stupendous fabric of mercantile enterprise, whose true basis is found in the personal integrity of the merchants educated in her schools and converted in her sanctuaries; to that gracious and protective liberty which, after centuries of experiment and change, found at last its true conditions of growth in pilgrim soil; to

that deep-seated and ever-increasing benevolence which has almost even now, and shall quite at last, put the needed bread into every hungry mouth, and a roof over every wanderer's head ; — to these the preachers of New England can point for testimony in support of that religion which they proclaim. With such ample resources at their command, I insist that any further growth of scepticism in our midst will furnish a grave impeachment of ministerial capacity.

Let no preacher, let no follower of Christ, think that Christianity finds her only or her best vindication in books. The preacher who relies on intellectual fence and mental subtlety in his effort to defend our ancestral faith commits a blunder so gross that it advertises his incompetency. What has modern scepticism done but bewilder and confuse, perplex and torture ? Has it made any one's path wider ? Has it taken envy from the bosom of the poor or pride from the rich ? Has it produced a scholarship profound enough to know its ignorance and to be humbled by it ? Or has it rather given us a class of men whose attainments are more brilliant than profound, and more egotistical than brilliant, — self-asserting men, clever essayists, pert specialists, makers of books to advertise themselves, men whose reputation as scientists is builded on bold guesses and bolder assertions, whose mutual disagreements and dif-

ferences of opinion make confidence in the correctness of their conclusions the proof of a blinder credulity than they ever charged upon the believers of the Bible? What has scepticism ever builded or established? What divergent interests has it ever brought into unity? What strength has it ever imparted to human weakness? What frivolity has it ever checked? What life has it ever assisted to a higher holiness? What death has it ever cheered? None. Nor can it. Its nature forbids the hope. A shadow cannot warm; a cloud cannot emit radiance. A negation cannot confirm any truth. There is no positive force in it. Its mission is to deny. Without a house itself, it works away at the underpinning of other men's houses. For forty years it has done nothing in New England but disturb and deny. That is its history; that is its supreme achievement. Men say that it has won a wreath. I grant it; but its wreath is woven from the generous faiths it has blasted, and the immortal hopes it has withered. Men say that its brow is white and garlanded. I admit it; but it is white with the paleness of despair, and the garland which shadows it is the garland of death.

My friends, let me deal plainly with you. My frankness is justified by the gravity of our position. We are living on the very edge of a great social revolution. Things are at too high a pitch

to endure. We cannot remain as we are, or go on as we are going in this country much longer. The old order of society is breaking up and going to pieces. New forces are making themselves felt. New ideas, new rules of conduct, new beliefs, novel and risky methods of procedure, startling opinions, are coming to the front. The changes that are taking place are simply stupendous. We are in the midst of a revolution without knowing it. We are all moving together, and everything is moving with us, and so we have no landmark by which to note the velocity of our movement. I do not say that the motion may not be safe; God grant it may be! for if the discoveries and inventions of the next century shall at all compare with the development and progress of this, the earth will be a glorious or a terrible place in which to live. If we keep on as we are going, it will soon become either a heaven or a hell. I feel, friends, that at such a time we cannot afford to part with a single conservative influence. The decline is so steep that we cannot detach any of the brakes. If materialism crowds spirituality much further, we shall present to heaven and earth the picture of a nation wholly gross in its purposes, its energies, and its hopes. Nor is it safe. A little more dishonesty on the part of your clerks, merchants, and you could not do business. There must be a certain amount of honesty on the part

of your agents, or checks and counter-checks are alike vain. A little more decadence in public spirit, a little more increase of the purely selfish element in politics, and your attempt at republican government will break down. A little more increase in the direction of laziness, of shirking in the performance of their engagement, on the part of the laborers of the country, and the industries of the land will be seriously crippled. We are close upon the border of a state of things in which wealth can neither be honestly gained nor kept; in which the relation between employer and employee is only a game where cunning is matched against cunning; in which honesty is neither an honor, nor the lack of it a disgrace; and the act of voting is only the privilege of electing which one of two unprincipled rings we prefer to be cheated by.

Such being our position, the present is the worst time which men could select in which to weaken the connection between religion or any other conservative force and the popular mind. Our safety is to be found rather in making that connection closer and more sympathetic. If Christianity fails us we are undone. If the future of America is to be a godless future, what disasters, what calamities, what ruin, are ahead of us! In thirty years they who live will see the beginning of another century. It is left to us to

decide what principles, what policies, what practices, shall be dominant then. It is left for us to say what shall be the faith and the hopes of that new age. It is left to us to fix the type of character, the order of thought, the standard of conduct, the religious belief of those who shall then live. Is there any fear that we shall transmit to them too great a reverence, too much integrity, too large a gravity, or any unneeded religious principle? No! The fear is that we shall transmit too little of these elements. The peril is lest the religious principle shall be so weak, so attenuated in us that it shall not be transmitted at all, and our descendants shall make shipwreck of body and soul, because they shall lack those conservative qualities and virtues which our parents gave as their best legacy to us, and which have been the means of our prosperity and happiness here, and the nourisher of a hope of endless happiness beyond the grave.

I appeal unto you, then, to become religious. Confirm yourselves in the faith and practice of a lofty piety. I appeal to you who are parents to do this for the sake of your sons and your daughters, who will be just what you make them by your teachings and your example. I appeal to you in the name, not alone of the living, but in the name of the yet unborn, unto whom you will transmit your characters, and in so doing irresistibly shape

and fashion theirs. Remember that the future teems with life. The past is no fuller of graves than the years ahead are with cradles. I summon these into life to deepen the solemnity of my appeal; I print their faces in outline upon the air: behold how dense, how thick, how multitudinous they crowd upon your vision, — millions upon millions of immortal beings, whose lives you can make or mar. In the name of these I appeal to you, I exhort you. Be what you would have them be, act as you would have them act, live as you would have them live, that you may die in the same holy confidence and peace with which we all desire they at the close of their mortal lives may pass up to their Maker and their God.

In vision I see two futures, both of which is possible, one of which will be real. In the one, if a certain school of thought has its way, and works itself fully out in its influence upon men's minds, it will be a fearful thing to live. For in it men will be developed to the fullest measure of refinement and possibility of power, sensitive along every fibre and tense in every cord; with instructed vision they shall look upon the material universe, able to direct the forces of matter as a master directs a slave, full of developed faculty, high aspiration, and unintermittent energy. So they stand, God-like in capacity and fair to look upon. But to them there shall be no shield to

ward away the arrows of pain, no immunity against sickness, no consolation in sorrow, no escape from death, no perception of a heaven of refuge and rest which their spirits shall find beyond the grave, no celestial state, no angelic destiny. That is one of two possible futures as I see them. I thank God that I see another. In this other, not remote but near, I see men also filled with knowledge and power, but under the direction of a holiness such as the first Adam lost and the second Adam came to restore,—full of dignity, innocence, wisdom, and love. In this future I now see all men appear like brothers ; wrongs are no longer inflicted, misery no longer endured. In it are no armies, no battle-fields, no slaughter, no war. Love prevails, peace reigns, and the glory of the Lord, whose laws are the corrected consciences of men, is over it all. Here, then, you behold the two possible futures. I put them before you, side by side. Which will you help make real ?

The age ahead of us will be one of construction. Mighty edifices will be planned and reared ; vast structures, intended for man's accommodation and safety, will go up in the face of the nations, such as the nations never saw. I seek, therefore, for a sure foundation, for the fit and adequate basis ; where is it to be found ? I reply, In God's Word, in religionreduced to practice, in justice and true

holiness. I do not expect to live to see the completion of it; but when the temple which will express the full and perfect result of man's labors is builded, and the capstone, one block of solid crystal, has been laid amid the shouting of all peoples, I pray that it may have the Rock of Ages for its basis, and its entire front one blaze of splendor, because it shall reflect. as a mirror does a face, the glory of the Lord.

SERMON II.*

THE GREAT CONFLAGRATION, AND OUR DUTY.

"Knowing that tribulation worketh patience." — ROMANS v. 3.

MEN are born under conditions of suffering. Suffering is not an exception, it is the very law of earthly existence. It enters as a component part into the experiences of life. The typical man of the race, even He in whose heart and life all that man might feel or be was manifested, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He shared, in becoming human, the common nature and condition of humanity. From the highest to the lowest member of the race, as history proves, tribulation has been common to all.

To-day, as citizens of Boston, as business men and Christians, we stand under the shadow of a great calamity, and every bosom feels the chill and dreariness of it. A catastrophe has fallen upon us, of such magnitude as to make it almost unparalleled in the annals of the world. At such a time there is but one subject of which men think, one theme about which they talk. I devote the hour of this service to the great topic. Whatever wisdom, whatever consolation, whatever cheer, I

* Preached the Sabbath evening following the great fire.

am able to give to you through the exercise of the ministerial function and the dedication of this opportunity to the attempt, I aspire to give I know not anything I would forego or withhold if by yielding it forth the public heart might be cheered and the public courage strengthened.

This is not the first time, by any means, good friends, that this city has been afflicted; indeed, it was cradled in adversity and grew up amid dangers. Flames, pestilence, war, tyranny, — these were the elements of opposition which it was compelled to face and conquer from the start. Two hundred years ago this city was visited by a great conflagration, which swept away nearly a hundred dwelling-houses, and gave such a blow to the then infant colony as caused many to predict its extinction. These experiences were repeated time and again before Boston went down into the terrible hazard of the Revolution. Then again she seemed doomed. If the Revolution had been a failure, you can imagine the fate that would have befallen Boston. She would have been razed to the ground and wiped out, and her foundations sown with salt, as the nest and cradle of political heresies too dangerous to oppression not to receive a signal repression.

Amid all these years, at every crisis men have not been wanting who predicted our ruin. Two centuries ago Boston was called "The Lost Town."

But amid all her perils she has kept the same undaunted heart, the same persevering spirit. More than once she has stood on the very brink of ruin; but the ruin has in every case been avoided.

In this brief *résumé* of your history you can find the prediction touching your future, — the only prediction to which you should give any heed. The forces of evil that threaten us have been felt and gauged before your time in this city, and we know therefore the line of their limitation. I know that men say that the wealth of Boston is gone; that her treasure is taken from her, and that she stands impoverished. This exclamation — I will not look upon it as a statement — is a mistake. It is a mistake, I say, born from excitement and a superficial estimate of what constitutes the city's wealth. Ladies and gentlemen, this is no time for egotism, for vain words and idle boasting, nor do I use such when I declare before you that the wealth of Boston is not taken from her; for it never consisted of material riches. The wealth of this city, since her charter was granted, since the hour she was born, never existed in blocks of granite and stamped coin. The world has never gauged our value by the money in our coffers. When strangers have visited you, the noted men and women of our own and other nations, they never visited Winthrop Square and India Wharf and State Street, to discover how

much we were worth. No. They said, "The Boston that is above all American cities in value, whose existence has been beyond price to mankind, is not to be found in bags that moths eat, and in places where thieves break through and steal." They turned their steps rather to Bunker Hill, sentinelled against forgetfulness by its shaft of commemorative granite; to Faneuil Hall, where Liberty, using the eloquent lips of your ancestors for her mouthpiece, made her first proclamation to the continent, — they glance at the pages of your history, luminous with the great names of your past and greater deeds, — they direct their eyes to those indices that the present affords, and, seeing the evidences of taste, the manifestations of culture, the integrity of merchants too honorable to resort to any tricky evasions to escape calamity, the patriotism, piety, and humanity which prevail here, said, "We have found a city at last whose material riches do not constitute her wealth, and whose value to commerce is not to be compared with her value to man."

So, then, I say that Boston, although she stands with her feet deep in the ashes of eighty acres of warehouses such as no other American city could show; although her streets are littered with the fragments of massive pillars and architectural designs which had cost her millions to erect, and which were her pride; although trade is inter-

rupted, accumulation checked, and the savings of years gone forever, still I maintain that Boston has not become poor. I know the value of money, but I know that it is unjust to this city for any to say that in losing it she loses her riches. Wall Street means New York. It was founded for commerce and not for an idea, and there the forces of her ambition and her energies converge. The very blood in her veins is metallic. The pulse which tells how that blood beats is her gold-room. A man who stands with his finger on that knows whether New York is sick or well. It is different with you. Neither State Street, nor Devonshire Street, nor Summer Street, nor all together, ever meant Boston. Wipe them all away, blot them from the map of your city, and the old heroic blood would never lose a beat. It would flow with an unruffled and an unweakened current in her veins. The light would not die out in her eyes, nor the color desert her cheek. She would still stand as erect, as confident in herself, as illustrious before the eyes of the nation and the world, as before.

It is this which constitutes the privileges of citizenship here. You are permitted to be citizens of a city whose wealth is composed of the glory of her history and the sacredness of her traditions; whose riches are her culture, her art, her science, her literature, the high-toned character of her mer-

chants, the eloquence of her orators, the intelligent patriotism of her children. And these are placed by the law of their nature beyond and above the reach of accident. Neither the flames of one nor of a hundred conflagrations can reach these. Boston walks the furnace with sandals that feel not the heat, and stands revealed in greater beauty amid the light of her blazing buildings.

But, friends, even if this were not true, — if your wealth was only material; if granite and iron, bales of merchandise and cunningly wrought fabrics, did represent your wealth, — still would my proposition remain true, still you would not be poor. Men say we have "lost" so many millions. I admit it. The word is a good one. It fits the fact. These millions are "lost," but they are not gone forever. You shall find them again. For the time being they have gone from your sight. The pride of granite and the glory of bronze, the wealth of metal and the splendor of the loom, have been volatilized; they were snatched from the solid forms and marvellous devices into which they had been wrought by the skill of human hands, by the energy of human minds, and were borne upward into the air in flame and smoke. And yet they are only gone for a time. They are only lost, not destroyed. You will search for this departed wealth and find it. The clouds will surrender it back to you, and you will anchor it again

to your pavements. The elements shall again be condensed to substance, and your streets be lined with the forms of architectural beauty and grandeur of which they have been so suddenly and ruthlessly robbed.

If one needed any other support than that which is found in your own energy and enterprise to sustain the prediction, it might be found in the fact than an uncrippled, a prosperous, a growthful Boston is a commercial necessity to New England and the country. Men do not decide where cities shall be built. Geography decides it. The conformation of the continent decides it. You may take New York as an illustration.

Her parentage was not of men. Her conception was of old time, when the Almighty traced the boundary of the sea. She was begotten with the primal pangs of nature, when this continent came forth from the womb of waters. New York is the child of God, born when he drew the outlines of our shores; plighted to commerce when he placed her in the arms of two rivers, and breathed life into her by the cool breath of the ocean. Men, indeed, have clothed her in satin, and adorned her with gold; but she was begotten out of the sea by the Spirit of the Lord.

The same is true with Boston. Here it was indicated that a city must stand when God stretched the line of our coast. So long as Maine keeps her

position on the map, while New Hampshire is anchored where she now is by her White Hills, while Vermont lies this side of Champlain, and Rhode Island touches us on the south, — while these States remain with their manifold industries and necessities, Boston must remain also, serving as a receptacle and outlet of their accumulations. Here must be the centre of New England commerce, the point of reception and supply of what New England produces and what her people need. There is not a village-store in all these States commercially associated with you that did not feel the shock when those warehouses fell. There is not one that will not suffer while this great gap and vacancy in the very centre of your city remain unfilled. It is not I that demand that these fallen structures be at once rebuilt. Every store, every church, every school-house, every college, every railroad, every vessel that sails in and out of New England harbors, yea, every day-laborer in shop or on farm, unite their voices in one great, spontaneous utterance of encouragement and cheer. The argument with which they urge you to speedy effort is not based on regard for and sympathy with you alone; it is based upon the hope, the certainty rather, of benefit to themselves as well. Nor is it New England that is interested alone. The grain-fields of the West, the lumber-woods of Wisconsin, the coal-mines of Pennsylvania, the cotton-lands of the South, every

interest, and every class and order of production, send the same cry down to our shores. "Live, rebuild, and enlarge your boundaries," they say. "We are members of a body of which you are the heart; receive from us and return to us, lest we die."

It is only at some such time as this that we realize the intimacy of that association of interest with which, through civilization, God is binding all men together. The isolation and antagonisms of the past are no longer possible. Suffering is no longer individual; it is communal, it is national. Gain and loss are mutual. Cities are connected like children of one family. If one sickens, all are anxious; if one is attacked, all come to the rescue. The flames had scarcely lighted up Summer Street before the wires that speak began to talk, and, putting our ears down to the sounding-plate, we heard far-off Chicago inquire, "What can I do for you?" New York, too, saw the dreadful light; the city of a hundred nationalities, — no less cosmopolitan in her virtues than her vices, thank God! — the island settled by the Dutch, saw that the city of the Puritans was on fire, and, hushing the babble of her streets, grouped herself around her bulletin-boards as men stand around the coffin of a friend. If anything was needed to give the lie to such as say that trade is selfish, that commerce is only mercenary, that the American thinks of nothing but dollars and cents, it can be found in the sublime spec-

tacle of spontaneous generosity which greeted Chicago one year ago, and which greets us to-day. Our embarrassment is not that of one neglected and in want, but of one unto whom is offered more than he needs, more than he can take. The hands that are eager to bestow are more numerous than the hands willing to receive. The sympathy is greater than the pain.

With all these necessities and material interests exhorting us, with the generous sympathy of the nation and of the whole civilized world spontaneously offered, with every aid that interest and friendship combined can proffer, what can prevent the resurrection of what has been buried, or the ascension of what is for the moment debased? I submit that the only way in which we can manifest either our wisdom or our appreciation is to proceed at once, without a moment's delay, and with all the energy and courage transmitted to us through ten generations of dauntless ancestry, to rebuild the structures and re-establish the industries which the conflagration has destroyed and interrupted.

But, friends, if the generosity of other cities is worthy of mention in this hour and place, much more worthy of mention is the heroism that you yourselves, in this dreadful crisis of your fortunes, have displayed. I know the record of your past. The heroism of your ancestors is known to me. As a boy, ere ever I had visited the locality of

their exploits, I had read with kindling enthusiasm the story of their deeds. I knew their history by heart; and, since coming among you, standing on the very spot where their fame was gained, that fame has confirmed in my soul for them and theirs an admiration my boyhood never knew. But amid all the glowing pages of that history, bright as they are with the record of deeds whose line has gone out to all the earth, and their melody to the end of the world, I know not that page more luminous than the one you have just added, or rather are even now adding, to the radiant scroll of this city's fame. It has been said that men do not know when they are heroic; that the crisis which calls forth heroism causes it to become the law and habit of the soul, so that what is in itself extraordinary passes unnoticed. Be that as it may, whether those who are to-day the living embodiment of the heroic mood and temper in this city are aware of what they express or not, the fact remains the same. The heroes are here; if unconscious of their heroism, then are they all the more heroes. Men that can stand, as many of you have stood, and see the accumulations of a lifetime swept away without a murmur; young men who can see the all that they were worth — valuable not so much because of its present amount as for what with good management and application they might yet make it — destroyed before their eyes, and yet begin again

with unweakened hope and cheerfulness of temper; men who can be flung from opulence to beggary, and give no sign that they feel the shock; men who ask of Misfortune that she spare them enough to pay their debts dollar for dollar and dime for dime, and, finding that their prayer is granted, go down to their homes happy with the happiness of an honest man; — such men, I affirm, are heroes, whether they know it or not. They were born of heroic blood, and of the same blood they are and will their children be. A city with such citizens cannot be destroyed. Fires may consume her, but out of her ashes a new and more brilliant expression of her energies will rise. With the occurrence of every new calamity her fame shall increase. The voice of misfortune shall sing her praise, and if she die at last, as all things earthly may, the lips of death itself would warm into life for once, that they might proclaim her eulogy.

But amid our regrets and pain for what is gone, let us gratefully remember what remains. We lose much, but we keep more. Your stores are gone, but your homes are untouched. The wives and mothers, the children of the city, all live. No fire has charred your threshold, no flames invaded your chambers. Your children sleep undisturbed at night, and the mother bends over them unharmed. We mourn, but not as those whose parents have been slain, or whose children are snatched away.

Those ruins are dire enough; but black as they are, they are not such as mark the former sites of homes destroyed. We are spared yet the spectacle of families broken up, of population scattered, of society disorganized. We suffer, but our suffering is not the pangs of unappeased hunger, of bodies exposed to cold, of sickness untended, of death uncheered. Our kindred and neighbors are still with us, our homes and our altars still stand, the friendships of men are not forfeited, nor our faith in God destroyed. The night is indeed dark, but we know that a dawn shall come; and even now, as we gaze into the sombre vault of our misfortune, we stand amazed at the number and magnitude of the stars.

I have said that our population is not scattered, nor will it be. Boston is not our workshop. Boston is our home. The motives that hold us here are not mercenary. Men go to New York and Chicago as a bee goes to a flower, to load itself with extracted wealth; then leave: men come to Boston to stay. A Bostonian does not feel at home in any other city. He leaves her with regret, in response to some necessity, and returns with gladness. The cause of this is to be found in the fact that we are a homogeneous people. This is, perhaps, the only American city in America. A certain per cent of foreign element is here, but it is comparatively so small, it is so distributed among and over-

shadowed by the native element, that it makes no positive impression on our character or history. In sharp contrast with this is the position of things in New York. Within her borders the nations of the earth tent. Every civilized nation has sent its colony. Go into one section of that great metropolis, and you are in Venice; the faces of the people, the language, the amusements, are all Italian. Go to another street, and you stand in Berlin; to another, and you have visited a French town; to the fourth, and you know that you are in Dublin. It is not so with us. Wherever a stranger goes here, he finds the New-Englander. Our language, our modes of thought, our type of character, even the cast of our countenances, are purely American. This it is, friends, that makes us homogeneous, and anchors us to this place. No disaster, no calamity, can drive us hence. People talk about our young business-men leaving us. They talk in their ignorance; they do not estimate aright the forces of those great laws and motives which bind the children of New England to her soil. I heard a man from Chicago talking in the cars the other day, and estimating how many of us would leave the city and come to Chicago. I could have told him not one. When we go we shall all go together. If Chicago ever sees us coming, she will see us coming two hundred and fifty thousand strong. We shall move down on her like an army with ban-

ners, take possession of her schools, her churches, her printing-presses, and make her over into another and a larger Boston. We shall stand by each other here. We shall stand by the city of our birth and our love. We shall live here because we prefer this spot to any other locality on the continent. And when we die, our eyes will be lifted in hope to the same sky on which our fathers gazed when they were summoned, and our graves will be made side by side with theirs.

I rejoice at the attitude you hold to-day before the cities of the world. The orderly bearing of our soldiery, the energy of our police, the brave spirit which has animated our fire department from the chief to the subordinate, the dignity and discretion which have signalized the conduct of the City Government, the courageous hopefulness of the sufferers, — these challenge the admiration and should receive the gratitude of every heart. Mistakes may have been committed, errors of judgment may have occurred; but these are so inconsiderable in number and degree that they find an ample explanation in the terrible emergency in which government and people were so suddenly placed.

At a time like this no one has a right to be selfish. We must all live on the level of the Golden Rule. The man who plans now only how to make the most money, who has the heart to build up his own fortune on the necessities of others, who

uses this calamity for his own private advantage, — such a man is an extortioner and a thief. This is a crisis. Interests far superior to any private interests are at stake. The ordinary maxims of trade are insufficient. They are not generous and noble enough to meet the emergency. An extraordinary claim must receive an extraordinary response. Intense suffering has a right to expect unusual consolation. The question is not how much money you who have entirely escaped or been touched lightly by the fire can make at this juncture, the question is one of sympathy, of helpfulness, of honorable and benevolent conduct on your part towards the afflicted and the depressed. The cheering word, the helpful loan, the willingness to accommodate, the waiving of a legal right that the spirit of all law may be honored, — these are the methods by which our duty can to-day be discharged. Any other course on the part of any man, no matter what his station or his name, will advertise him as a dishonorable citizen. If such conduct should be practised by many, the shame of Boston would be greater than her loss.

I rejoice that an opposite spirit distinguishes the action of our citizens. If we have learned no other lesson by our experience, we have at least been convinced that friendship is not dead nor generosity extinct. With the fire, the spirit of selfish competition disappeared. The rival became a

friend. Men whom we had considered miserly we found to be generous. The calamity which has fallen on us has made us brothers. Henceforth we shall love men better by reason of the love which has been shown us. We shall all of us hereafter be more neighborly than we have been.

We know also, better than we did, the true value of wealth. The worth and the worthlessness of riches are perceived. We know what they can buy and what they cannot buy, and this is the first and prime essential for correct judgment concerning them. They can buy food for the body; they can buy raiment; they can purchase ease, and help us toward knowledge; culture can be bribed, indulgence of the senses secured; — all these money can command, for these are in the markets of the world and can be bought. In this direction it has worth. But there are things more essential than these that it cannot buy. It cannot buy exemption from pain nor surcease of sorrow: the hearts of the rich ache with the poor, and their eyes are as often filled with tears. It cannot purchase protection from sickness nor escape from death: the rich and the poor are brothers in their equality of suffering and exposure to the common catastrophe, if death might thus be named. It cannot buy you, young men, an easy conscience, or that peace which cometh to men's hearts when they feel that their sins are forgiven. It cannot

give you love for man nor faith in God. This lesson, I say, we have learned. In the light of our blazing wealth we saw how little it can purchase of those things which the heart must have if it would not break, which the soul must obtain if it would not die.

Such, in brief, is the lesson of the fire. Other and it may be sublimer truths will come to us as we reflect and ponder upon the occurrences of the past week. The face of the Future to-day is veiled, but her countenance is intelligent and her mouth full of wisdom. When the veil is fully lifted, and the lips which are silent now have told us all they know, in the light of that instruction and revelation I make no doubt we shall understand the divine significance of this affliction, and glorify with our grateful praise the Almighty Being who understands the uses of sorrow and those traits in us which make its discipline salutary. Until that time I am willing to wait. Until then I turn to the strength and consolation of patience. And as the Christians of all time and every nation have done, whether they stood bound to stakes or lay languishing in dungeons, whether they bore the ordinary troubles of life or were ingulfed amid signal calamities, we turn our faces upward, and with the steady calmness of trust and hope exclaim, "Thy will be done."

SERMON III.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL.

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." — LUKE xxiv. 47.

THERE are two ways I shall mention in which the gospel can be preached nominally, but not virtually. And in the first place it is thus preached when it is presented only as a system of morals, as the best presentation of ethical philosophy.

Of course I do not deny that the gospel allows of philosophical treatment, or that its truths may be assorted and woven into a fabric whose rich finish and mutually assisting colors shall cause it to stand unrivalled beside all other combinations of men's thought. I know how beautifully it bears the test of analysis; how its sequences are the admiration of logic, and with what exactness its parts may be fitted into a whole. I yield to none in my admiration of what is called systematic theology. I remember that Knox and Calvin and Jonathan Edwards were preachers of the Cross. Nor do I forget that I am speaking to-day in that portion of the globe where the gospel has captured both the hearts and the heads of the people, and where for two hundred

years half the intellectual energy of the country has spent its force in earnest, often heated, theological discussion. Whenever I grasp the sword of the Spirit, I feel that the strength of the hilt within my palm is made up of twisted wire. But while I admit all this, I assert, at the same time, that the force thus represented does not represent the force of the gospel. No system of morals, no philosophy, no number of ethical propositions, can represent the glad news. He who reasons on no higher level than these reasons with an uninspired and unillumined intellect. That upper realm of electric, of divine force, upon entering which the human mind is filled with celestial, puissant fervor, he has never touched. Beyond that line of finished culture, of narrow though exact conception, of verbal polish and melodious intonation, as an orator, he can never go. Upon the very edge of the extraordinary his tethered feet halt. The power to soothe men's sorrows, to inspire the despondent with a lasting buoyancy, to breathe enduring hope into the bosom of despair, to start the guilty conscience into healthy terror, to melt the stony heart by tenderest appeals, to rive from apex unto base the ponderous shaft of some nicely chiselled and strongly cemented national vice,— this the preacher of a mere philosophy can never do. Heaven lends not its power to one who has no faith in heaven. He who does not believe in the bolts of Jove cannot be a Jove.

My fear is, friends, that this distinction is, to some extent at least, being lost sight of in New England. I fear that the philosophy of Christianity is crowding out Christianity; that the theology of the seminaries is usurping the throne formerly held by the glad news of the Master. The gospel field is esteemed by some as too narrow for the fullest exercise and development, not to say the advertisement, of natural gifts and acquired culture, and hence he who aspires to great usefulness and a wide fame must go beyond that line which circumscribes the preaching of the gospel. How erroneous this is, and how fatal is the mistake upon those who make it, will appear to any of you who will calmly consider for a single moment the character of the gospel. The gospel is not a single shaft of truth chiselled and duly set by divine power. It is no shaft at all. It is a tree planted by the rivers of water, whose flowing is out of God's own loving heart, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. Christ himself likened the kingdom of heaven to a dozen different things, and he might have gone on likening it to numberless other things, and then not have illustrated it. The fact is, it is too manifold in its adaptations to be illustrated. It is not just to the whole to compare it with a part, and the gospel is a whole as set over against every need, hope, fear, and experience of the human heart, and hence it is above comparison.

For one, I feel that the presentation of the blessed gospel to my fellow-men is sufficient to tax the utmost power, both natural and acquired, of the most gifted and cultured of men. It is related to everything that touches human progress. It has a supply for every need, a solace for every sorrow, a balm for every wound. I regard it as alone able to supply the inspiration which prompts one to live a noble life; as alone able to apply the needed checks to man's otherwise reckless conduct; as alone able to introduce and confirm good government among the nations of the earth, because it alone is able to restore unto man the divine ability to govern himself. I address myself to the preaching of the gospel, therefore, feeling that it represents principles, energies, and powers so adapted, so abounding, so potential for human good, that no capacity can fully appreciate, no scholarship apprehend, no eloquence adequately express them. The gospel plan of salvation is not to me one among many stars appointed of God to give light unto men; it is the one great luminary in the moral heavens, vast of orb and perfectly sphered, deriving its beams from the Source of all light, alone able to dispel human darkness, and forever rising with healing in its beams. Wherever I see any wrong, any sorrow, any ignorance, any vice, any sin, there I long to preach it. I picture it as standing like an angel beside the

cradle, its face radiant with joyful sympathy, and holding steadily above it a shield ample enough to cover mother and child both. At the grave I behold it, its countenance no less radiant, its posture no less sanguine, its shield reversed, and the departing soul cradled and borne away on what, during all its earthly life, had been its sure defence.

How vain is it, then, for the human intellect to turn from this to lesser themes for inspiration! What permission so gracious, what career so noble, what mission so high, as to proclaim unto men the simple message of grace! Give me a vocabulary sufficient, give me the art of persuasion that shall be adequate, give me that address that shall win men to the hearing and believing the glad news, and I ask no more of culture or of grace; for along with such power to preach the gospel will come whatever is needed in philosophy or desirable in culture.

Again, I remark that preaching the law is not preaching the gospel.

It was most unfortunate, as I think, that the New England pulpit in its origin and earlier efforts drew so much of its inspiration from the Old Testament. I need not recount the history of the causes which led to this. The fact is patent to every one at all familiar with the religious history of New England, that the early divines had a one-

sided and inadequate conception of Christianity. To them the New Testament was only a fractional addition to the Old. Their judgment of men, their conceptions of God, their interpretations of providences, their manner of speech, even their deportment, were shaped and colored in accordance with such revelations of God as were given to men prior to the incarnation of Christ. They write and speak as men who felt that they were still under the law, and not under grace. Their theology was harsh. Their presentation of God was untrue, because imperfect. They saw Him too much as a judge, and too little as a father. The shadow of Sinai rested darkly on Calvary, and obscured its effulgence. Their misconception bore its natural fruit. Revivals were intermittent, and widely separate in time. Persecution was sanctioned, nay, inaugurated. Custom and precedent became sacred, and the power of the entire ecclesiastical machinery was set in stubborn opposition against needed change. Legislation was relied upon to control the morals of a community. Liberty of opinion was denied, and free discussion practically forbidden. Against this state of things, constituting a practical tyranny of the worst kind, men naturally and inevitably revolted. I doubt that there is a single error in religious interpretation thriving among us to-day whose root does not reach back to that old state of things. The fathers

forgot Calvary, and their children forget Sinai. The one party preached judgment divorced from mercy; the other party are preaching mercy divorced from judgment. The pendulum, as I think, will steady its oscillations in the next generation, and limit its movement within the proper extremes.

Now, whether you agree with me in these remarks touching the position of the New England pulpit in the beginning or not, you will, I trust, agree with me in this, that to preach the legislation of the Old Testament is not to preach the salvation proclaimed in the New. Moses and the Law can make no such impression on the human mind as the Saviour and the Cross. Fear is not the equal of love as a redemptive force. The pulpit that draws the inspiration of its teachings from the Old Testament is weak beside one which breathes forth the spirit of the New. The language of Isaiah is lofty, and the words of David are sweet; but from the mouth of neither did there ever come such utterances as came forth from the heart of Him who "spake as never man spake." Now, the command of Christ is upon us all to preach the gospel. God as revealed in Christ, and not as shadowed forth in ancient symbol, as predicted in prophecy, or as hymned in psalmody, is the God whose nature we are to explain, whose ways we are to vindicate, whose love we are to declare. I am not a Jew. I am not a priest of a

temple worship. I am not a servant of the national deity of any one race or nation or tribe. I am simply one of millions, all of whom are our brethren. I am an ambassador of One greater than the Temple. I am a child of Him who is the tender and loving Father to every human being. This distinction the Christian preacher should feel. It should be evident in every sermon; it should be breathed forth in every prayer. He should stand before people as one appointed to bring an invitation and not a threat. He should never forget that Christ declared in so many words that He did not come to judge the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved. But why do I say that a preacher should do so and so? What forbids me to do it myself now and here? My hearer, I am a preacher myself of the gospel, an ambassador of this same God, and I have a message for each of you. To you who were once warm in heart and bright of hope, but who are now cold, indifferent, despondent, I come with the message to cheer up. You have not lost the ability to obey, to do, to fulfil. You are not deserted of God. You have not fatally offended Him. You are not counted out of the number of the elect, and given over as lost. The source of your strength and hope was never in yourself; I say — and I charge you to remember it — the source of your strength and hope was *in God's love for you,*

and that love remains unchanged. Now, all of you who have fallen off in holy effort; all you who have given up prayer, frightened from your old communion with God because of your sins; all you who have lost courage and have said, "It is of no use for me to try any more, I am not a Christian, and never was one"; all you who were once open and professed disciples, but who are now hiding your faith in sinful privacy, — I charge you all to remember that God has not given you up, that He has no idea of giving you up. You are His by adoption. You have acted strangely, perversely, perhaps, but He clings to you, and He will cling to you; for in his heart, yea, in the fulness of infinite love, He has settled upon the determination to save you, and He will save you. What do I ask? I ask you to co-operate with God. I ask you to allow Him to wash your sins away. Present yourselves before Him, and He will do it to the last stain. I ask you to admit the old, sweet, reassuring hope that now stands knocking at the door. Cast your fears to the winds. Of what are you fearful? Your sins? But Christ has made atonement for sins. But I have sinned repeatedly, persistently, and against light, you say. Very well; I know all that. We have all sinned in precisely that way. Every redeemed soul in heaven sinned when it lived on the earth in that way. But this does not alarm me as a preacher,

for I preach a Saviour who is able to save unto the *uttermost.* What is it that is recorded? "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." It is not threat, it is not penalty, it is not condemnation I proclaim, but glad news, good cheer, encouragement to try again, and a sure prediction that you will succeed, because He who is for you is greater than he who is against you.

O that I might give you discouraged ones something of my courage, derived as it is from such a conception of the Divine nature, that it causes nothing in the way of redemption to seem impossible to Him! O that I might make you understand the significance of Calvary, — cause you, while sitting here to-day, to see it unfold in mighty vision before your eyes, until you saw what energies, what forces, what operant mercies, what yearnings for human souls, what divine determinations to save, it represents! How Satan is exalted and Christ diminished by your fears! Bring here the record of your lives, — your indiscretions, your lapses, your broken pledges, your cowardly desertions, your sins and crimes and vices,— bring them all here, I say, and pile them up before this people, and, standing by this collected testimony of your guilt, enough to condemn a thousand souls, smitten with the sense of your short-comings, smite upon your breast and say,

"God be merciful to me a sinner!" and I declare to you, in the name of God, that you shall go down to your house forgiven. One drop of that precious blood shed on Calvary shall cover, shall blot it all out forever and forever.

Tell me that the Old Testament can supply a Christian pulpit any such theme to preach as this! Tell me that out of any legislation, out of any philosophy, out of any mere creed, out of any theology as a science, the human heart can draw any such inspiration as comes to it when telling men the story of the Cross! Away with dogma, away with labored definition of disputed points, away with the defence and promulgation of sectarian views! These do not make the gospel, these have no place in a gospel pulpit. Tell men rather of pardon offered, of sins forgiven, of help extended, of consolation bestowed, of life made holy, and death made triumphant, and their minds will apprehend and their hearts adore the loving mercy of God.

There is one remaining point to which I ask your attention. It is the significance of, and the duty involved, in the command, "Preach."

To preach the gospel is to make public proclamation of it. Preaching is not private conversation; it is public discussion, argument, appeal. To excel in social grace, in suavity, in courtesy of manner, is not to fulfil this injunction.

These excellences of nature and training do not represent the powers of a preacher. They are serviceable in Christian work, but not serviceable in the way pointed out in the text. I ask you to reflect upon the nature of that influence exercised by the public speaker. Consider the knowledge he imparts, the changes and growth in men's views of which he is the cause, the conviction he produces, the activities he starts, the measureless influence of his appeals. Consult history, and observe the prominent position the orator has always occupied. Whether his audience was a circle of savage warriors, a congregation of the populace, a raging mob, or an assembly of enlightened statesmen, whatever the audience or the occasion, his words have led to momentous consequences. War and peace have often hung upon the movement of his lips. Thrones that no cannon could shake he has overturned with a motion of his hand. Despotism has trembled before the rebuke of his lips, and liberty more than once found needed refuge under the shield of his speech. Considering that this power is perpetual, born anew with the birth of each successive generation, you realize the wisdom of the great Founder of our religion when He selected it as the prime agent by which it was to be advanced. My own feeling is that the modern Church does not begin to appreciate the power of this instrumentality. Living as we do in a free

country, where education, and hence discussion, are universal, among a people eager to hear and quick to receive impressions from those who have qualified themselves for public expression, I claim that nothing is so important as that the Christian pulpit should stand exceedingly high in popular estimation. The true orator will never lack an audience. In himself is the all-sufficient advertisement, the all-sufficient attraction, to gather hearers. No infelicity of circumstance, no opposition of adverse condition, can prevent. His fame precedes him; an audience always awaits his coming. These are facts that no one denies, but they are at the same time facts that the churches, even of New England, have never given due weight to in their administration. Again must we complain of the influence of tradition and the maxims of the past. When the country was thinly settled, and audiences small, the preacher as such had little opportunity. The pastoral relation and influence were comparatively of far greater importance. Personal contact and acquaintance were then possible and potential for good. Nor can any one overestimate the direct and blessed usefulness of the old-time New England pastor as he went from house to house and from person to person among his people. But all this is changed. We live to-day amid a very different state of things. The old possibilities are no longer with

the ministry; and what might be called his "personal influence" can now be exerted by a minister over only a very small fraction of his people. These facts are patent to all. We may regret it; we may shut our eyes and refuse to see what is painful to our sensibilities; but the old pastoral relation, as it once existed between the ministry and the churches, is passed away. It does not exist. And there is not a clergyman or intelligent layman in New England but that knows that it can never again exist. We have entered upon a new order of things, and our wisdom will be shown, not by resisting, but by wisely shaping the new order. We shall cultivate the same fields as did our fathers, but we shall cultivate them in a different way.

It is for the reasons enumerated, and similar ones, that I am led to reject as unwise all attempts to establish the ministry on what might be called the social basis. Rushing from house to house in pastoral visitation, multiplication of tea-parties at the homes of his principal parishioners, attendance at every meeting of the sewing-society and the deacons' board, — this is all well enough as a recreation and a mild form of dissipation: but they do not fit a preacher for his pulpit; they do not qualify him to expound and apply the Word of God in such a way as to enlighten men's minds and stir their hearts. For one, after a candid consideration of all

the facts in the case, my mind has reached the painful conclusion that the New England pulpit represents to-day a lower average of that class of intellectual power needed to make it popularly strong and influential than at any previous time in its history. Certain facts are patent. Never was public speaking so highly esteemed by the masses as now. Even music must yield the laurel to oratory. Even the Greeks were not more willing hearers than are we. Nor is this eagerness to hear confined to our cities. I suppose that for two years my observation of New England has been as close upon this point as that of any public man. And I can truly say that, whether my appointments took me amid the snows of Northern Vermont or the mud of Eastern Maine; whether I entered a little hamlet in the dead of winter under the very feet of the White Mountains, or visited the towns that skirt the Long Island coast, — wherever I went, I have been surprised how quickly and under what little inducement an audience can be assembled in New England. And yet over against this must be set the fact, that although our church buildings in the average are of small size, they are not ordinarily half filled! You can put two and two together, friends, and tell me the result. My own opinion is, — and I declare it frankly everywhere, — my own opinion is, that the neglect of the sanctuary on the part of the people is

largely due to the neglect of the study on the part of the preachers. Half the clergymen of New England honestly suppose that it is their duty to peddle the gospel week-days from house to house, rather than to preach it in the sanctuary on the Sabbath. The result is, that the time spent in doing the one leaves them unprepared to do the other. To this must be added another fact, that wherever you find one who has qualified himself to preach the gospel, you ascertain that the trouble is to find an audience-room large enough to accommodate the audience. Supply the inducement, and the audience appears. No matter what is the character of their theology, the result is the same. In verification of this statement run over a brief list of names. Theodore Parker and Starr King, Lyman Beecher and Kirk; Cuyler, Beecher, Storrs, and Talmadge, of Brooklyn; Hall and Chapin, of New York; and Kittredge, of Chicago, — a man whom you should have kept and nourished in the soil where God planted him, — these are only a few of those men of God who are preaching the gospel to thousands every Sunday. What does not the Church and the nation owe to these men, and their like? What enlargement of knowledge, what liberalizing of sentiment, what noble ambitions and impulses, what progress in virtue, what needed reforms in Church administration, have not sprung from their teachings! I know not how without

them the cause of Christ, in the great centres of our population, could have been saved.

The problem, friends, — and it is one to solve which the Church should instantly address herself, — the problem is, How can we best multiply this class of men? If you wish to purify your politics, to keep the business instinct of the nation from becoming thoroughly sordid and atheistical, to fill your almost deserted churches, to reach with the message of salvation the dying masses, — then multiply by a thousand-fold these noble voices that can proclaim the wisdom, the righteousness, and the love of God acceptably to men. O that I might live to hear these voices sounding over the hills and through the valleys of my native land! O that I might live to feel, when I saw, even if with my dying eyes, the flush of the Sabbath morning tinting the eastern sky, that the light of the rising orb would shine that day upon fifty millions of my countrymen — their work suspended, their labors dropped, their worldly cares forgotten — walking, husband and wife, parent and child, friend and stranger, in happy but solemn procession to the house of God! Then should I pass with an untroubled breast, and eyes swimming with happy tears at the celestial vision.

I would that my voice might reach every lecture-room in the land, where with great skill and consecration of purpose young men are being taught how to preach bravely and without morti-

fication to empty pews. Then would I charge them to think lightly of everything not directly calculated to fit them to preach attractively and powerfully the glad news of salvation to tempted, falling men. All scholarship that cannot be utilized in this direction is vain; all erudition to no purpose. A tongue and heart knowledge of the gospel message; a wide knowledge of men; familiar acquaintance with the details of the common people's life, — an understanding of how men toil and rest, make money and lose it, are tempted and fall, live and die, — these are the elements of success as a preacher of the gospel. Men with such knowledge and attainments are the men we need by hundreds and thousands to-day.

The charge of the Great Head of the Church to his disciples is, to go into all nations and make proclamation of the gospel. The charge remains unfulfilled. We need not go abroad to find those who do not hear the message. In our own city the churches are counted by scores, but the untaught can be counted by thousands. Who are building churches for these? Who are providing preachers? What man of ability is surrendered even once a month by his own flock to carry the glad news to these? The churches are liberal in the giving of money, but what congregation has as yet surrendered even a fraction of its intellectual entertainment and spiritual privilege on the Sabbath, for the temporal improvement and eter-

nal good of the ignorant and godless masses? Not one. The line between deprivation and supply, between starvation and surfeiting, between the few and the many, is as clearly and unmistakably snapped as ever. What you have done serves to bring out only the more plainly what remains to be done. The mission school suggests the pulpit. The bread on the table advertises painfully the absence of meat. I demand a preacher and pulpit for all these neglected ones. I demand that the few shall share as brothers their privileges with all; that the churches of Boston, speaking in the votes of their parish and membership meetings, shall say to the Lord, "We have given our money, we now give our pastor, for the conversion of our city; take and use him, that he may be unto others what he has been unto us." This is the demand that I make modestly, reverently, and earnestly. I make it in the name of every public interest worthy of conservation; in the name of order and health and decency; in the name of that blessed liberty which will be imperilled by any further increase of our present ignorance, vice, and impiety; in the name of all these wretched beings living without God and without hope in the world; and, lastly, in the name of Him through the preaching of whose gospel I look for the regeneration of the whole world.

SERMON IV.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GREAT LOVE.

"My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." — PROVERBS xxiii. 26.

LAST Sabbath I spoke to you touching God's love for you, as shown by the measure of His giving. I wish to-day to speak to you touching our love for Him. Last Sabbath I called your attention to the Father's love for the child. I wish now to call your attention to the child's love for the Father. The Father's love is a great love. Every conceivable mark of greatness is in it. It is great in its warmth; great in its service and desires; great in its sacrifices, its impulses, its cravings, and its endurance.

Such love should receive a corresponding return. The child's love should be like the Father's love, — *great.* I emphasize the word *great.* No small love will meet the obligations of the case. We must love God greatly if we are to meet the requirement of the text, "Son, give me thine heart."

Now, a great love is characterized by certain essential elements. There are certain signs and marks invariably associated with it. It advertises its presence in the heart by such services, such

desires, and such sacrifices, that even the most casual observation takes note of it. Allow me to remind you of several of these characteristic qualities of a great love.

The first I mention is this: it likes to be with the object of its affection.

To love is to be attached to the object of your affection. Love is never at rest, never content, save with its own. The lower orders of life reveal to us the presence of the same impulse. When two birds mate they live together. Storm cannot keep the robin from its home. The far-flying eagle cannot pass a night away from the gray crag on which he has built his house. Rover that he is, he feels the drawing through the distance of a hundred leagues. The winds may be high, the tempest abroad in the heavens, yet he will not smooth his plumage until he sits upon the gray rock where his expectant mate sits brooding her tawny young. The horse is uneasy unless it can hear the loved voice and feel the loved hand. The charger will range the battle-field, undismayed by the tumult; indifferent to death, he will search along the rows of the dead, he will sniff at the heaps of the slain, until he finds his master. The dog is truer yet to the longing of its nature. I confess that more than once I have been deeply moved at the spectacle of a lost dog in your streets. I saw last week an English setter, looking for her

lost master. How wildly she raced up and down the pavement! How she bounded from side to side of the street! What fear and alarm in the rapidity of her motions! What plaintiveness of inquiry looked out of her large liquid eyes! What to her was the crowd! Hundreds passed her, — the fair, the good, the kind; what were they all to her! Beauty stood looking at her from a hundred pitying eyes, but none had his face. A score of white hands were stretched to caress her; but his palm was not among them. Many voices called coaxingly to her, but her ears heard not the music of the one voice. At last it came, — from way down the street, a clear ringing call, such as her master had sent out a thousand times in the crisp stubble, calling her "to heel." It made my blood leap to hear that free, hearty cry, suggestive of gun and thicket and autumnal-tinted woods, lifting itself up amid the din of your pent-up streets. She heard it, the splendid creature! Amid the clash of iron-shod hoofs, the jar and jolt of car and cart, the pattering rain of hurrying feet, the familiar cry of that loved voice came to her. An instant, — as if to recover from the shock of so glad a surprise breaking in upon her despair, — an instant she stood the picture of relief, of happiness, and then away she bounded and went streaming down the street. I did not see the meeting, but I can imagine it. Love

was with love once more, and therefore love was happy.

If this is true of love, if we find this mark characterizing affection among the lower animals, with what an intensity may we not with reason expect it to be found in the case of man. And in very truth we do. Love finds its happiness in companionship, its misery in separation. Home is born from this impulse. Married life rests upon it, as the open flower upon its parent stem. When two hearts love each other greatly, there is no higher symbol of pain to them than separation. To have the loved face nigh, to be able to sit and gaze upon it at will, to see the loved form moving about, to hear the voice whose tones are sweeter to your ears than sweet music, to feel the gentle touch which can make the head forget its aching and the heart its troubles, — this is happiness, this is love's content. Grant it this, and poverty is not dreadful. Grant it this, and sickness and pain can be borne. Grant it this, and even the dungeon loses its terrors, and death itself, if shared together, becomes an eternal embrace. But to be divided, to be separated; to wake and not see what makes waking blessed; to sleep and not feel the overshadowing security that makes slumber restful; to eat bread unsweetened by sharing of it with one beloved; to listen in vain for the desired voice; to watch and not find with all searching

the dear face; to open the door a thousand times and never see the loved form standing on the threshold; to sicken and crave a nurse you cannot have; to die divided, separated, apart, — this to a great love is misery; this it cannot bear, for this would break its heart. We are all agreed then, I suppose, friends, that one of the characteristics of a great love is found in the existence of a strong desire to be near, to live near, to die near, the object of its affection.

Another characteristic of a great love is the presence of a desire to serve the object of its affection.

Love is full of services. It is tireless in ministry. It is always giving itself away. It is a busy, active, energetic principle. It finds its happiness in working and spending. What will not the mother do for her child? what the wife for her husband? Let the recollection of your childhood, let the experience of to-day, testify. I have seen many a pearly hand, fair and plump and sweet to look upon; many a palm of pink have I seen, and fingers whose purity rivalled the gems they wore; but the hands that live in recollection fairer than they all are the lean, thin, toil-wrinkled hands of my mother. They were once full and fair and white as any lady's, and all of us, her children, knew how and why they had become thin and worn. They were made so by toiling for us; the

dear old weariless hands, without ornament save the one plain circle of gold worn through all the years, from marriage-day to grave-day, — what had they not done for us all? They had lifted us, and fed us, and clothed us, and soothed us, and labored for us unceasingly, and to-day they stand in recollection the symbols and type of serving love, — those aged, shaking hands of my mother. It was love, friends, that made them active; it was love, friends, that made them tireless. And what a joy it was, when she was aged, to sit and hold them, and smooth them, and caress them! And now that they are folded in everlasting rest, they live in vision with me, and will live until I clasp them once again upon the everlasting shore.

And so it is with love everywhere. It lives to labor; it lives to give itself away. There is no such thing as indolent love. Look within your heart, friend, and see if this is not true. If you love any one truly and deeply, the cry of your heart is to spend and be spent in the loved one's service. Love would die if it could not benefit. Its keenest suffering is met when it finds itself unable to assist. What man could see the woman he loved lack anything, and be unable to give it to her, and not suffer? Why, love makes one a slave. It toils night and day, refusing all wages and all reward save the smile of the one unto whom it is bound, in whose service it finds its delight, at whose feet

it alone discovers its heaven. No danger that language can be too strong or statement too fervent which is used to portray the services of love. By cradle and couch, by sick-bed and coffin, in hut and palace, the ministries of love are being wrought. The eyes of all behold them; the hearts of all are moved at the spectacle.

The third characteristic of a great love is seen in this: it desires union with its object in thought, if not in body.

An old poet wrote, "Love never separates." If you will reflect, you will be surprised at the prominent place imagination occupies in our affections. The body is subject to the laws of matter. It is subject to the bondage of locality. Place and time tyrannize over it. Not so with the spirit. Place and time do not affect its movements. It roams free at will. Its limitations are found, not in outward things, but in its own desires, and only in these. I will suppose some stranger far from his home is with us to-day. His body is here, but where is his mind? If the physical represents him, then is he a thousand miles from his home: but if his mind and soul represent him, then he is not here himself; he has passed out from our midst along the line of our thought, as I speak; he has entered his own house; he stands with his wife and children at this moment. Indeed, love never journeys unaccompanied by love. When we

have found one face and form above all faces and forms on the earth, we never are parted from it. Wherever we journey, that face journeys with us. The whole world is to it only what a frame is to a picture; in the centre of all things which we gaze at, that one bright face is seen. When love is great and pure enough to become a sublime passion, it has found that larger liberty which the spirits know and enjoy. As the face of God is ever present to the eye of a great faith, so the face of the dear one is always present to the eye of a great love. Indeed, this is love's consolation. For who of us could part from those we love, if parting meant separation? Who could let go the lingering hand, if from our clasp it dropped into forgetfulness?

In addition to this desire on the part of love to have the object of its affection always with it, there is to be added the stronger craving for union hereafter.

This craving grows out of our immortality. It is because we feel persuaded that we shall live that we feel that we must love, and if we love, then must love have its own. It is to this that Noon Talfourd alludes, when in reply to the pathetic interrogation of Clemanthe, whether they should meet again beyond the grave, he makes her lover exclaim: "I have asked that question of the hills, that look eternal; of the streams, that lucid flow

forever; of the stars, among whose fields of azure my freed spirit will walk in glory; — all was dumb. But when I look into thy living face, there is something in the love that mantles through its beauty that will not wholly perish; yes, we shall meet again, Clemanthe."

Whatever doubt the Greek had two thousand years ago touching immortality, we have none to-day. What the Pagan dreamed the Christian knows. The Bible has brought life and immortality to light, and made our earthly existence not the full measure of, but only the introduction to, life. Eternity being ours, every great love lives in constant reference to it. Its gaze, like that of Evangeline, is forever directed ahead. The span of human life is too brief to satisfy its longing. The husband and wife expect to meet beyond the grave. The mother will find her child among the angels. The lover knows that somewhere on the plains of heaven — waiting for him and expectant — he will meet her whom his soul loveth. Yea, love shall find, and finding keep its own forever, beyond the tomb. This is its prayer, its hope, its solace. Wherever in all the world you find great affection, with it you find a great faith in union and happiness in heaven.

One other characteristic, and my description of great love will be complete. I refer to its *unselfishness.*

Little loves are selfish. They are forever appropriating, never bestowing. They are full of mouths to eat, but they have no hands to earn. They take continually, but never give. Little loves are exacting, querulous, suspicious. They vex and torment and sting. They are happy only when full of prosperity, of health, of flattery. When brought to the test of deprivation, poverty, absence, and sacrifice, they fail. But great affection is unselfish. It is happier in giving than receiving; or, rather, it receives its happiness in giving. Great love is even-tempered, trustful, constant. It is happy in poverty, happy in self-denial, happy in every crisis of its career. Money is nothing, fame is nothing, when put over against the one to whom it is bound. It is even willing to die for its object. This is not imagination. It finds its illustration in your own feelings, friends. I select any father in this audience; a hard-working man, who, by thirty years of toil, has scraped together a handsome property. That property means a great deal to him. It means credit, reputation, an easy mind, support and rest in his old age. But dear as it is to him, let one of his children — the first-born, now almost come to man's estate, or the golden-headed prattler that fills the house with sweet noises — be stricken with sickness and threatened with death, and is there a father here that would not give every farthing of his property

for the life of his child? Yea, you would take it all up,— store, houses, lands, stocks, and money,— and give it all for the life of your child. The existence of unselfish love, of love that sacrifices all things for the object of its affection, is not, as you see, therefore, so rare a thing as some at the first thought might think. Indeed, I imagine that death itself would not be able to daunt the courage of affection which is common among the noble and the good. Here my description ends. Here it should end; for what greater love is there than that one should die for his friend?

I have now characterized love. I have pointed out to you the marks by which it is distinguished. You have assented to my description, because it was based upon what you yourselves, to a greater or less degree, have felt. I ask you now to apply this description of a true and great affection to that love which you profess to have toward God. Is your love such that nearness to Him means joy, and absence distress? Do you love to serve Him?— for that is the second test of love. Separated from Him in person, unable to look upon His proper face, do you find His face as a source of delight constantly with you in memory? Is your love unselfish, or do you love Him as a means of securing His favor, and receiving assistance from Him in the hour of extremest need? Do you love Him in order to have Him, or do you love Him

because you have Him? And is your love for God a love that not only craves nearness to Him now, but longs for eternal union with Him hereafter? I do not say, Christian friends, that you shall not be saved unless you can answer all of these questions in the affirmative. It is not for me or any other man to arrogate to himself familiarity with the eternal counsels of God, or say at what point the going forth of His mercy stops. I only say, that if, in the light of this analysis, your love for God is not distinguished by these marks, then it is not a great love, then you do not love Him as you should. I do not wonder that you are timid and faltering in prayer; it is only a perfect love that casts out fear, and you are not made perfect in love.

Your evident duty is to set yourself at once to apprehend God. To know Him is to love Him, and your not loving Him shows that you do not know Him. Leave all other studies, I pray you, and study God. You fear because your faith is weak, and your faith is weak because those views of the Divine nature, and that apprehension of its inherent loveliness from which faith is born, and on which it feeds, are not with you. You will never grow in grace until you grow in knowledge.

I have said thus much to such of you as are Christians. I wish now to address another class, —you who may or may not be Christians, but who

have not as yet proclaimed your spiritual condition. I do not think, — and in this we agree, — I do not think that joining a church or assenting to a creed will make you a Christian. Neither did Christ. I often think that creeds and ceremonies serve as much to conceal as to reveal the true point at issue between the soul and God; because no language can describe God. Human utterance is not worthy of the Divine lips, not adequate to express the Divine thought. I have never been able to frame a sentence which, as a description, was equal to the Being to be described. Even the Spirit suffers in His efforts to communicate with man, because of the meagreness of those means afforded by human letters. In mood, in vision, in temper of soul, and not by letter, does He to-day reveal Himself to us. The great commandment to-day, friends, as of old time, is this: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." That is the real point. Upon this, as Jesus said, "all the law and the prophets hang." If examining committees had always kept this in mind, and held the candidates up to the line of it, we should never have had proslavery churches or rum-drinking churches. The time is coming when a man's feelings toward his pastor and the officers and members of the church will be considered better evidence of piety than his

belief or disbelief of the doctrine of election. It is regarded, I believe, a great heresy not to believe that there is such a being as Satan; but, after my way of thinking, it is a greater heresy yet to believe in him and act like him! Affection is what holds a family together. Love makes home. And the time will come, I feel persuaded, when religious congregations will be held together by the same divine attraction, the same celestial bond. Love for God and men will be the basis of church organization, and not intellectual interpretation of inspired truth. Not but that the interpretation will be held as essential, but it will not be placed at the top of the column, as it is now. It will be placed lower down, where it should be located, where Christ located it; while that love to God and man, upon which everything else hangs, as clusters hang to a vine out of which whatever of sweetness they have comes, will occupy the foremost position.

But if the question which concerns your highest happiness here and hereafter, friend, is not touching technicalities of creed, of ceremony, of intellectual interpretation of selected passages out of God's Word, what is the question, what is the real vital point, which gives emphasis to every religious discussion, and weights every occasion like this with solemn significance to your soul? I assure you, friend, that the great question is this,

"Do you love God?" Or, to put it in another form, speaking to you as a child of God, as you are by creation, "Do you love your Heavenly Father?" This query, observe, is not addressed to your heads, but to your *hearts.* My target is not your brain. I do not care how or what you think, — what your mental state, what your intellectual position is, — I am making a central shot at your feelings. I wish to know, simply and solely, how you feel, what is the state of your heart, what is your emotional position before God to-day. I ask you, then, briefly, directly, solemnly, "*Do you love God?*"

I am aware, friends, that the answers may, in many cases, be given without due reflection and from misunderstanding. And I will imagine that certain classes, through their representatives, put in their answers in the affirmative, and the reasons therefor, to the end that we may examine into said reasons, and decide upon their soundness or lack of soundness. The first I interrogate answers in the affirmative with alacrity. His reply is quick and decided. I ask him for proof, to examine himself for evidence; and his response is, "Why, sir, of course I love God. I take a walk every pleasant morning in the fields. I see God in the flowers, grasses, and running streams. I hear Him in the song of birds and hum of bees. I see Him in the hills and the rolling waves. Why, sir,

I delight in Him and His works. What better proof could I have or give?"

To this man, representing a large class, I reply: "This is not necessarily the proof of love, friend; it is only the evidence of an admiration. Æsthetic appreciation is not piety. A pagan Greek, with the Grecian sensitiveness to the loveliness of form, the beauty of color, and the harmony of sounds, might feel, did probably feel, centuries before Christ, all that you have described. And yet you would not claim that a pagan could meet the gospel requirement five hundred years before the gospel was proclaimed. Your love is the artistic, not the Christian love. Is it the flower, or the Creator of the flower, that you love? Is it the sky, or the Almighty Former of it, that you admire? Is it the wave, with its masses of green, its emerald curvature, and its crest of moving snow, before which you stand delighted; or have you that spiritual vision which sees within the hollow of the rolling billow the moving of a Power mightier than the wave, the reflection of a Face whiter than its crest of snow? Are you a worshipper of Nature only, or of Nature's God?"

I ask another, who represents poetical reverence, if he loves God, and he responds, "Certainly; I have from childhood." I press him for proof, and he replies: "I find it in my feelings. I enter a church: I feel a hush come over my

soul; the vaulted roof, the darkened air, the resounding organ-roll, the measured chant of choir and priest, the subdued responses, the kneeling suppliants, the solemn liturgy, — these affect me. I bow, I kneel, I sob, I worship. Is not this sufficient evidence that I love God?" "No," I respond, "it is not. It may be worship; it may be only superstition. It may be the result of piety, potential and permanent; it may be only the result of poetical reverence, inoperative and transient. Saul felt all this before the marvellous light fell on him from above. Luther felt all this before he was converted. A pagan devotee might feel all this his lifetime through, and die unreconciled to God. Beware of mistaking a mere poetical frenzy for deep, divinely inspired religious conviction.

I ask the bigot if he loves God, and he starts back and gathers himself up as if insulted. "Love God!" he shouts; "of course I do. Do I not stand up for Jesus in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation? Did I ever baptize a man unless I buried him three feet under water? Did I ever tolerate any looseness in doctrine? Did I ever withhold my hand when the Lord commanded me to smite? Did I ever allow any man to come to the communion-table unless he believed in election and total depravity and immersion? Don't I hate God's enemies? A pretty man you are to

ask a leader in Israel if he loves God!" I might proceed with my enumeration of typical characters, each a representative of a class; but why do it? It is a thankless and a grievous task, — this laying bare of foibles, this showing up of human weakness, blundering, and mistakes. Why do it at all? you say. I will tell you. I cut into these assertions, being made on all sides of me, in the Church and out of the Church, because I believe them to be unsupported by Scripture and life. I cut into them because I believe them to be false and hollow at the heart. The seeds, the principles of divine germination and growth, are not in them. I wish to puncture these crimson bubbles of a delusive hope, which are being blown up by a thousand mouths and cast into the air, in order that men may behold their emptiness at their collapse. If they cannot stand our examination, how shall they endure the examination of the last day! If the feeble breath of our mouth shakes them, what will come to them when that great wind, which blows only once, but blows for all, bears down upon them! I ask you all to remember that before the eye of the All-Seeing your lives, your hearts, stand naked and exposed to-day.

And now, friends and strangers, I come to you with this inquiry, "Do you love God?" That He loves you, you know. The mercies you enjoy day

by day prove it. If you love Him, do you love Him *greatly?* Is your love for Him a serving love, a self-sacrificing love, a craving love, an enduring love! If you do not love Him as yet, I put upon you the responsibility of deciding to-day. The Sabbath, which you supposed in the morning was to be an ordinary Sabbath, shall be distinguished because of the opportunity it offers, and the obligation it imposes. It shall be distinguished in memory, so long as you have the power of recollection, as the day in which God made a certain overture, as the day in which that overture was accepted or rejected. The Lord comes to you now, right here, at this moment, and says to you, "My son, my daughter, give me thy *heart.*" It is your love He demands. And what, pray, is your answer? Do you accept or reject His overtures?

That great statesman, Daniel Webster, — the man you loved and honored, who made your influence continental, and your name known wherever the English language is spoken, — when an inquisitive friend, wishing to explore the secret of that great intellect, asked him, "What, Mr. Webster, is the greatest question you have ever considered?" stood for a moment in grave silence, and then, turning toward the speaker, said, "The greatest question I have ever considered, sir, is my personal relation to my God!" I seem to hear that voice sounded

forth in solemn cadence from the eternal world, culminating over this vast array of heads, saying to us in even greater emphasis than he used when on the earth, "The greatest question that you can consider, O ye residents of the city where I once lived, is your personal relation to your God."

SERMON V.

POWER OF THE GOSPEL TO SAVE.

"And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." — MATTHEW iii. 9.

THE Pharisees were egotists, and their egotism went out especially in the direction of their religious privileges. They regarded themselves as favored of God to the exclusion of all others. To be a Jew was to have spiritual opportunities enjoyed by the citizens of no other nation. This egotism, this pride, this vanity, was based upon their history. They had been especially blessed of God. More than once had they been saved, as a nation, by the direct and miraculous interposition of Providence. They regarded themselves, therefore, as favorites of Heaven, and on the strength of this estimation became proud, self-asserting, vainglorious. It never occurred to them that others could be saved besides themselves, and this led them to underrate and despise everybody not connected ancestrally with them. This was what John, in the words of the text, so bravely rebuked. They judged men by their externals, by their accidental connections; and he, as a messenger of God, resented this judgment, and

asserted the true principle which underlies all human relationship, whether of one man to another or of all men to God.

Now, human nature should not be measured by what is accidental, but by what is essential. Man's attributes never gauge man. Put all the powers and faculties, all the vigor and force, a man has together, and the man is larger than they all. Back of all these, and within them, as the face is back of and within the veil hanging in front of it, is the man himself. The human element in humanity is more precious than all else connected with it; the only thing about us, perhaps, that God loves. For what are man's strength and wisdom, what his cunning and skill, and what is the aggregate result of these before God? Does He love the student because of his thinking, the artist because he has an eye for colors and proportion, the mechanic because of his skill, or any one because of his gifts and abilities? The question answers itself. It is evident that the Divine regard for the human race is based upon something deeper, holier, more universal than these accidental peculiarities. It was not for these that Christ died; not for these that God resolved to save the race; not for these that the Holy Spirit is at work to-day.

It seems to me that God's love for the race comes under the same law as our love for one an-

other. We admire talents, we are fascinated with beauty, we honor ability to perform; but love feeds on a deeper root than these. The man is dearer to us than his abilities; the woman more precious than her beauty. These are the accidental, not the essential, elements of our friends: we are conscious that we love something more than all these. When our friends lie on the bed of sickness, the vigor of the mind and the beauty of the countenance gone, weak, pallid, senseless, our hearts still cry out for them the same. It is the soul, I claim, that calleth unto soul in that dread hour. It is that awful something in us — call it spirit, being, essence, what you please — that stands upon the edge of an endless shadow or a limitless glory, stripped of earthly attributes, mighty only in itself. It is this we love; it is this that never dies, chosen for and mated unto what was like unto itself forever and forever. This we know is the law that governs human love. The same, even to a greater extent, is true touching the Divine love. It is neither talents, nor beauty, nor any accidental attributes that He loves; for He loves those not distinguished for these, and He loves us when these depart. When you lie, friend, emaciated and helpless, no muscular strength, no mental vigor, no nervous force in all your system; when memory, reason, imagination, and every faculty that to-day distinguishes you, refuse to act;

when beauty, grace, and it may be friends, have all left you, — still the love of God will hover over you as the parent bird will come and hover over the old deserted nest. You may survive your friends, but you will never survive the love of God. That lasts. What is this something in us that God loves? Tell me who can. It is not ability. Why, I sat upon your Common one night last summer, and an idiot came and sat beside me. He had no sense, no thought, no feeling. He gibbered and drooled. His laughter had no meaning, his gestures no significance. He rose at length, and, muttering to himself, he shambled off into the darkness. I followed him, and saw him make his bed upon the sward, and fall asleep with a thousand unnoted stars above him. Then I left him. Did God leave him? Did that poor idiot really sleep there alone, or did the heavenly bands stand round him while he slumbered, as if he were really precious? And if they did, what for? By whose request or order were they there? And what was there for God to love in him? No faculty, no ability, no vigor. What then? I answer, the soul; the clouded, the eclipsed soul; the spirit darkened; the human element without a faculty to advertise it; the simple, inherent likeness of the Deity.

In the light of this supposition we see how Christ could love all men. All that had the

human nature shared in His affection. Toward the high and low, rich and poor, civilized and barbarian, He felt the same; and for the same reason, wherever was the human element, there, wedded to it, was the Divine regard. Humanity was the object of Divinity.

Now, my criticism of society is, that it is as yet so little Christianized that it judges chiefly by the externals. We prize men for their abilities, we honor them for their talents, we admire them for their skill and taste, we gauge them, in short, by what they do or are able to do. The commercial standard is the one by which our hands measure manhood. A man must be worth something to society, to commerce, to art, or we do not regard him. He must be useful in order to be esteemed. Now, my point is, that from the Christian point of view this is all wrong. Christ did not die for the talented. He did not visit the earth in order to save those of great abilities. He does not stop to ascertain how much a person is worth to society before He offers salvation to him. The commercial standard is not the celestial standard of regard. He did not love man because he was great in capacity, and would become a very useful agent to him. This is a utilitarianism such as men use in their judgment one of another. God discards it. The ear of Infinite Love never listened to the whisper of utility. Strength is no more His than

weakness. The grain of sand and the planet alike belong to Him. Man and angels are equally dear.

I look abroad over the world, and find the earth belted with distinctions. I look again, and not a line is visible. God has wiped them all out. His love is telescopic, seeing but one object at a time. All created things are brought to a focus upon His heart at the same instant. As regards men, all are dear to Him. Loving them, not by reason of what is accidental to them, but by reason of what is generic, His heart gathers them all into itself, as a mother, upon her return home after absence, gathers to her bosom the shining heads of all her clustering children. So it comes about, friend, that that barbarian in some distant benighted land has a place in the bosom of God equal to your own. Your election does not exclude him. So, too, it comes about that all the poor, feeble weaklings are loved of God. And also all those no-account men and women, as the world judges, who add too little to the art and wealth and culture of the world to be noted, whose only use seems to be to do a certain class of low but necessary drudgery, and then fill unnoted graves, — all these are sharers with you in the Divine regard.

Perhaps the best proof of this is to be found in your own sense of what is expected. For who of you would be satisfied if I should preach a God other than this? What a Deity that would be

who should love people because of their talents, their skill, their personal endowments! Who could preach a gospel applicable only to scholars, artists, merchants, and trained mechanics; or, if it was preached, who of you would hear it? You would unanimously reject it. You would assert that a love so limited, so contracted in its operations could not be divine. Such an affection you would declare is unworthy of God; such a Christianity is unworthy of Christ. The water that could float only large ships, while it allowed the little ones to sink, you would say, is unfit for the purposes of commerce; and the salvation that could save only large souls, while the smaller ones were lost, would be inadequate to meet the moral and spiritual exigencies of the race. No; the Deity must love all, and love all alike. And this is the same as saying that He must love man as man, irrespective of accidental bestowments; love him because he is human; love him simply and solely because he belongs to a beloved race.

Ah, friends, that is it; and that is just what God does. He loves man simply and solely because he is human, because he belongs to a beloved race. This is common ground for all on which to stand in hope before God. Here the savage can stand. Here the poor slave finds a footing, and the poor sin-debauched denizens of North Street tenements get a safe and sure lodgment.

This is blood-bought ground, purchased for all on Calvary, and free to all. Nor is there any other ground for any. Not because he has talents, nor because he can contribute much to society, is a man beloved of God; but simply because he is a man, — His own child, the son of His creation.

The true worth and dignity of man, then, as revealed in the light of the Cross, consist not in any accidental possessions, but in that nature bestowed at birth upon all alike. It is this nature which men overlook, and fail to enter in that column which represents kinship and obligation. Hence they ignore the fraternal relation of man with man. If they help the lowly, it is in a patronizing sort of way, and not as a man helps his own brother. They despise the very ones they benefit. They see no dignity, no value, in people who cannot push their way in the world, or better their low estate. They do not respect those whom they support, nor love those whom they are helping to make lovely. But in spite of the good such people do, they do not do their full duty. Their hearts are not lifted to the level of Christian requirement. Patronage is not brotherhood. The poor are not to be treated and thought of as a lower class of creatures providentially placed in our charge to control and educate. They are to be regarded as common sharers with us in one and the same human nature; and this fact is to be

regarded by us as sufficient, not alone to save them from contempt, but to place them, as brothers and sisters, among the foremost of the earth. In our age the Christian public have fallen in love with the lowly. Every church must have its pet institution, acting through its agents upon the lowest strata of society. Culture and fashion refresh and amuse themselves by studying the problem of vice as expressed in the *personnel* of the alley and the gutter. Far be it from me to find fault at this. Not mine the wit to laugh at lavender kids and real lace in North Street. I instance this only in the way of suggestion and warning. By so much as the spirit of patronage enters into our charity, it is not Christian. All this might be done as truly by pride as by humility. Many a man would pick a beggar out of the gutter and have him carefully tended, who would never shake hands with a mechanic on the streets, or invite a modest clerk to his parlors. It is easier for pride to help a very bad man than it is for it to acknowledge that a very poor one is its equal. What should be done, and what I pray all you who are rich and talented to do, is to drill yourselves into a full, cordial assent to the doctrine that God has made of one blood all the nations of the earth, and will at last call them all alike into judgment; that it is human nature, and not circumstance, that constitutes the bond of relationship; and that no one

should ever for one instant confound patronage with philanthropy.

Why do I insist at such length upon this distinction? Well, I will tell you. The civilization which the world to-day fosters is utilitarian. Utility is its god. Whatever can assist in the development of the material resources, in æsthetic culture, in external adornment, power, and grace, is prized. Whatever does not directly do this is contemned. What is he good for? What can he do? How much can he give? These are the questions upon every lip touching our fellow-men. Amid such a state of things a powerful pressure is put upon us to worship skill, faculty, force, — the capacities or attributes of the man, and not the man himself. If a man has not capacity, who cares for him? If he cannot supply society some needed skill, or tact, or grace, what does he amount to? He is a nonentity in our civilization, and who cares for nonentities? I submit to you all if this is not, in the main, a just analysis of our civilization. Its object is to make scholars, poets, orators, skilled mechanics, successful merchants; and the rewards it offers are the ones best calculated to stimulate men to supply what it needs. Whoever knocks at the door of society is asked, What can you do? what can you give me? Attributes, and not nature, give him admittance. To be an immortal soul is not enough; you must be able to

model the clay, and color the canvas, and rule the forces of commerce, or no one thinks of you as worthy of regard. And this evil, this inadequate estimation of men is so woven in and connected with what is right and essential, that it is universally accepted as the true one; and yet I hold it to be radically false. God does not value man by this rule. Man was worth very little to society when Christ came. Judged by the utilitarian, the New England rule, ninety-five hundredths of all the race were of no account. Yet God saw something in them to love. In the eyes of the Saviour the great mass of ordinary, uncultivated, unskilled people that swarmed over the globe were not lacking dignity. There was something so lofty, so divine in human nature, even in its lost estate,— something so essentially noble in man, however debased he might be, — that none might despise him. "Whosoever shall say unto his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." All this seems very trite to us; but when He spoke these words they were startlingly novel. No other man, prophet or sage, had ever inculcated such views of human nature. In them we are taught God's estimate of man as man, independent of all his surroundings.

Now, friend, you may not accept Christ as a Saviour, you may not desire to enter upon those

higher experiences enjoyed by the mind and soul of him who believes Jesus to be divine; but you must at least admit that He first and in the supremest sense insisted on the dignity and worth of the individual man, be he what and where he might. If you are a humanitarian, a believer in and lover of your kind, come with me, and we will sit down amicably together at the foot of the cross, and exchange reverent and loving thoughts of Him who has opened our eyes and made us see a brother's look in every human face. We will talk of Him whom the common people loved, whom the religious tyrants of His day hated, whom the bigots slew; and we will take this book, — call it a record, call it a biography, call it the Bible, call it what you please, I will not quarrel with you over a name, — and we will drink, until our souls are filled, from this fountain of wisdom, humanity, and love. O thou precious Book, great charter of human rights, proof and pledge of a universal brotherhood of man with man the wide world over, New England must never forget thee! For without thee, she would be like an army without a banner, a prophet without inspiration, a well without a fountain.

The best proof that Christ was more than a mere man is found, as I think, in His generous conception of human nature. To Him every man was an extraordinary being. In His eyes no one was

mediocre, every one was worth dying for. Whoever wronged one, whoever underrated one, it were better for that man that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the depth of the sea. Now, such an estimate of man could never spring from a purely human source. It never had; it never has. No one who does not profoundly realize man's connection with God can feel thus. You must see a tree against an azure sky in order to be impressed with the curved symmetry of its outline. Its beauty can be seen only when a glory is back of it. And so it is with man. You must see him with the glory of his origin and destiny back of him before you can realize how great and exalted he is. You must see a king before you can understand what it is to be a king's son. Now, Christ invariably saw man in this light, — saw him in all his divine connections, saw him in his possibilities, — and, seeing him thus, had the fullest faith in him. He saw of the travail of his soul and was satisfied. By an unfortunate and terrible shock man had been cast down. He was like a star thrown off from its orbit. He had lost the restraining attraction of a central orb, and had become a vagrant through the heavens. He was a force still, but an undirected, disorderly force amid the harmonious forces of the universe. He must be replaced in his old position, feel again the force of proper connections,

and move once more along the divinely prescribed line. All this he saw; all this he determined to do; all this he is able to do. I have perfect confidence in the power of Christ to save. No degree of sinfulness, no accumulation of vices, appalls him. I am no optimist: I know how wicked and vile and brutal human nature is. My ears have heard the cursing, my eyes have seen the filthiness, of men. But what is sin over against God? How easily and quickly he can crush it! Conversion is a fact. Some of the worst people on the earth have been changed by the grace of God. It is beyond denial. The Divine origin of Christianity is not shown in its history alone, but by its every-day effects. The proof that Christ is a Saviour is not found alone in the New Testament. It is found in my own heart. A sceptic might as well deny that I have memory as to deny my religious experiences. The divine results wrought out and being wrought out in me prove that Jesus is Divine. I know that the waters in the old family well at home are cool and sweet, for I have drunk them for years. Do you think, young men, that any clever writer or orator in Boston can persuade me that they are stagnant and unfit? How then can they shake my faith in those living waters which my soul has drunk for years, and which, because of their goodness, my soul will continue to drink, until I die?

Now, friends, permit me to say that I have faith — the same faith that Christ had — in human nature; not in your nature, or mine only, but in that common nature given of God to all men. I know that it is not what it should be, but I know it can and shall become what it should be. No one is so ignorant, so vile, so debased, as to suggest a shadow of doubt to my mind touching what is possible. Summon the vicious of your city, let them come cursing and swearing into this hall, until the seats you occupy are crowded with their turbulence and wrangling, and, looking into their faces, devoid of reverence, suggestive only of neglect, of deceit, of the lowest order of thievish cunning, I will say, "From these stones God is able to raise up children unto Abraham." And if you ask me for the reason of the faith that is in me, I will respond, My hope is built upon the power of God acting upon the nature He has given them.

The true motive — the motive that will outlast all other motives, and blossom when the leaves of all others have fallen — is that which springs from a proper view of man. You must look at human nature as Christ looked at it before you can be Christlike in your feelings towards it. When you realize the Divine origin and connections of a soul, its purpose, its value in the eyes of God, and its destiny; when you recall what sympathies it has

awakened, and what efforts it has caused to be put forth on the part of heaven; when you consider that every human being is of the same identical stock with yourself, and because of these things to be loved and assisted, — then will you feel as your Lord felt when, out of love for man, He left His native heaven to save him. Not as a harsh, satirical inquisitor, but as your religious teacher, do I now ask, How many of you entertain such views of man? how many of you estimate human nature at the Divine standard? how many of you in your thoughts of the poor think patronizingly of them, and not fraternally? If any, I exhort you to change your thoughts. Feel your relationship with men. Love them, not in a restrained, fashionably religious way, but in a natural, human way. Select a person who has nothing but his soul to recommend him to your regard, and say, "He is ignorant and rude and unfortunate; but, nevertheless, he is my *brother*, and I will do as a brother should by him." And you women who are good and lovely and favored by fortune, I charge you to remember that there is not one of your sex in this city, however low she may be, however unfortunate or sinful, that is not your sister. Why am I so anxious for this? Because, this relationship once admitted, once felt, all needed work will follow. Once let love be established, and conduct will be right. Why, love

is giving; you all know that. Calvary was a gift from the love of God. As I understand its significance, it did not mean justice, nor law, nor penalty, only as these are different phases of love. Sacrifice means love. Love is a sharer; it knows no selfishness, it has nothing of its own. It craves nothing for itself save the object of its affection. Possession of this means happiness, contentment, peace. All God craves is the soul. All the Christian soul craves is God. Sacrifice is not only the end, it is the very inspiration, of love. Its symbols are a plough and an altar, — ready to toil in the furrow of the one or to be offered up on the other. It is brave: it endureth all things, and yet it hopeth all things. Its face may be pale, — in its lines you can read the story of joy deferred, of burdens borne, of wrestlings and agony, — but its eyes are forever luminous, and the lids never droop save in death. This is love; this is the impulse that gave us Christ; this is the power, the motive, the energy, that shall yet save the world.

Standing here, girt about with Christians; remembering what we once were, aliens and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel; remembering what we now are, children by adoption, and heirs of the heavenly world, — I should be false to the evidences of my senses if I did not heartily believe in the power of the gospel to save men. Looking

over your heads, I behold a sea of faces, thousands upon thousands, — faces of want, faces haggard with remorse, faces emaciated with sickness, faces whitening at the near approach of death, — and in the look of every face upturned to mine I read the interrogation, "Is there rest, is there peace, is there hope for me?" Will you allow me to speak to these? The water which you put aside because you are filled will be drained to the last drop by their fevered lips. My brothers, — you men without gifts, without skill, without knowledge, but brothers still, — there is rest, there is peace, there is hope, for you. You belong to a race beloved of God. Your nature is one that the Lord assumed when He came to our earth. You are not of godly parentage, you are not in the line of Abrahamic descent; you came from a rebellious stock. You may be dull, dull as the clod; you may be as ignorant of spiritual laws as blocks of wood; you may be only stones: but God is able, even out of such material as you present to His hands, to raise up children unto Himself. Go abroad then, all of you who hear me, with this message. Go forth to your new-year's work fired with this splendid hope. Preach that men are brothers one of another. Act up to your preaching. Trample pride under foot. What will pride do for you in your dying hour? What will it be when you stand before God? Fling false distinctions that separate men,

lifting one class above another, to the winds. Humanity cannot be graded. It is the same dear, precious fact, one and the same forever, before God. Whatever separates, divides, antagonizes men, pray down, vote down, fight down. Favor only that which brings men together, which converges the lines of divergent interests, which obliterates invidious distinctions, which sends the message of salvation to every ear, to the end that men may be at last joined in heart, and stand like happy children, hand clasped in hand, before one Father and one Throne.

SERMON VI.

THE DIVINE NATURE AS SHOWN BY THE DIVINE MEASURE OF GIVING.

EPHESIANS iii. 17 – 21.

IN this passage we have our minds called to the nature of God, and the method by which we are to understand it. The passage is remarkable because of the very redundancy of the expressions used. The words seem to push one another, as if the writer felt the need of their multiplication in order to express what he was struggling to impart.

The measure of God's giving is man's ability to ask and think. Human craving is the standard of measurement adopted as the one by which we are to get an adequate conception of the Divine nature and sympathies. I propose to follow the suggestion of the text in my efforts to-day to assist you to a fuller understanding of the Divine nature.

"Above all that we ask or think" is the language of the text. This is a surprising use of language, — I may say, a surprising assertion. Get well in mind the exact phraseology. It is not, above all that man is able to ask in justice, or in

modesty, or even in hope; it is, above all that we are able to ask or think absolutely, — that is, above our very ability, unchecked and unmodified by all restraining considerations. As I said, the use of language is surprising. The assertion bewilders one. As we ponder it, the imagination springs out upon such a flight that it makes us dizzy. Why, provoke man with a sufficient extremity, and what can he not ask? Let him be lowered into the depth of some necessity, and what will he not crave? Let him find himself on the brink of some awful emergency, let him feel himself threatened by some dreadful peril, and what is there in all the provisions of safety that he will not clamor for? Why, it would seem that the cry that issues from the lips of such extremity might tax any imaginable ability. And yet it is written that God is able to do exceeding more abundantly than you can ask or think. Ask or *think!* Wonder upon wonder! Where will this accumulating of language stop? Try to compass this assertion. I confess my inability. It was just here, when writing this very page, that I made the attempt. I paused. I said, "I will test myself. I will call up the forces of my mind. I will see what I am able to do in the way of *thinking.*" I did. I sent my mind north, I sent it south; I jumped it to the east, I flashed it to the west; I shot it up into heaven, I stood in hell; I thought of wealth, I

thought of fame; I compassed the whole realm of desirable things; — I found I had the power to think *anything*, to desire *everything*. There seemed no end to my capacity of desiring and wishing. I found no limit save in my finiteness of conception. Ah, that is it, friend; God's ability is above our conception. We think according to the measure of our capacity; He does according to the measure of his capacity. It is the finite want over against the infinite fulness that this text presents to us; man's craving for blessing over against God's craving to bless; the babe's desire for simple nourishment over against the large-hearted, large-minded mother's dreams and hopes and aspirations for her boy when he shall have become a man.

Remember, friends, I am not telling you what my views of God are, but what the Bible views are. I am not telling you of Him; through this passage He is telling you of Himself, — His great, glorious Self. He says to you, one and all, "My children, you do not understand me; you do not understand your own Father. Come up and measure me. Bring up your power of asking and of thinking, and measure me by it, and see how much greater I am in my goodness and giving than you are able to ask or think." Moreover, it is as if He should say, "Do not come in your lower moods, your dull moods, your ordinary, unaspiring moods. Come in your best moods, — when you

are spiritually quickened, when your longings are strong in you, when your hopes are high and your aspirations all sublime. Come then, and come so, and you shall see how much above the possibility of measurement, even by your best moods, I am in my willingness and ability to give."

Ah, friends, this is the wonderful thing concerning God, — you cannot understand Him; not because He veils Himself, but because He is so vast and bright. The soul finds the same difficulty in understanding Him as the eye finds in its attempts to study the sun. Power and excellency are so concentrated in Him, — His goodness is so fervid, His glory so effulgent, His love so intense, His wisdom so bright and penetrative, — that they overpower the soul in its attempts to analyze Him. Like the sun, He hides Himself in His own brightness. The glory which makes Him to be seen of all conceals Him from all. It is His life we cannot understand; and yet, as John says, this life is the light of men.

I remark, secondly, that this is God's *habit* or disposition, not an occasional impulse. The difference between an impulse and a habit is this: an impulse is transient, a habit is continuous. An impulse must have an inciting cause. It is a result suddenly produced by some operating cause. But a habit is not a result. It is a cause

itself. It is not a production, but a producer; not an effect, but the promoter of effects. Underneath all acts, lower than every impulse, you find, and always will find, a disposition. This disposition gives the spirit its personality, and grades it morally. Disposition characterizes being. If the disposition is bad, the being is bad; if the disposition is good, the being is good. It is the character of the disposition which makes the difference between a devil and an angel.

Well, this largeness of giving on the part of God is habitual with Him. It springs from His disposition; nay, it is His disposition. It is not the result of any influence brought to bear upon Him; it is not a mood which comes occasionally to Him: it is His own natural, eternal mood; it is the only way He ever felt; it is His disposition; it is God, — for, as the Apostle says, "God is love."

This should be borne in mind by you who pray, and when you pray. When you kneel, remember God's mood, call up in remembrance His disposition, do not forget what He has told you of Himself in this passage, think of Him as feeling from all eternity just the same.

This view of God is essential to piety, especially for two reasons: first, it accounts for many a Divine transaction otherwise unaccountable. It is the only explanation of the incarnation of Christ, and the plan for man's redemption. Men say Cal-

vary has taught us how God feels. So it has. It has taught us more. It has taught us how God felt. The effulgence of the Cross shines backward as well as forward. It is an orb radiant on all sides, and at every point. It lights up time, but it lights up eternity also. Standing on the crest of Calvary, I look backward as well as forward. I see what preceded as well as what followed the death of Christ. I get some such view, some such hint of things, as John had when he wrote, "In the beginning was the Word." Yes, away back in time, away back beyond time, in that far-stretching, limitless eternity, I see God, and He is in no respect different from what he seems to the eye of truthful piety to-day. He has not changed the tithe of a hair. Wherever I see Him, I see Him with the same disposition; the loving placidness of His mood, like a level sea without a ripple, without an island, without a shore, stretches backward and backward, on and on, until its even surface is lost to my wearied imagination.

From such a God Christ might come. From such tranquil depths of benevolent being the wish and ability to lift poor drowning Peters might rise. From such an eternal disposition of loving, without ebb and without flood, because the source of it was changeless and the measure of it perfect, the Only Begotten might indeed be born. But from anything less than this no one can conceive

that the great plan of human redemption in Christ might originate.

Secondly, it is this view of God, also, that makes our *faith large*. I emphasize the word *large*. Large faith, — where will you find it? Small faiths are plenty enough. Faith that trembles, faith that doubts, faith that shrinks, faith that cannot believe itself, — this you will find everywhere; you will find it in *your own breast*. I find it everywhere; I hear it preached in sermons, I hear it uttered in prayers, I hear it sung in our churches, I find it in the young convert, I find it also in the fears of the dying saint. Why, the struggle of the Holy Ghost to-day is to make you who are children of God, heirs of heaven, and joint heirs with Christ, believe in your own salvation! What a state of things! You remember how the same peculiarity in the early disciples grieved Christ. O, how it pained him! What a low estimate of God's love and power it revealed! How he fought against it! How he ransacked the language for forms of statement, for illustrations, to drive it away and crush it out. At one time he would say, "Ask, and you shall receive"; at another, "Come unto me." Again he would assure them that 'God was more willing than earthly parents.'

And near the close of his stay with them, how touchingly, how pathetically, he would tell them, "In my Father's house are many mansions."

What we need, friends, is more faith to take God at His word; to give common credence to the utterance of supreme truth; to feel that neither our asking nor our thinking can ever equal the measure of God's giving.

Again, this view of God is closely connected with prayer. Half the prayers we make are arguments. Men go up to God with a statement of their miserable condition, and then go to pleading and arguing before Him for a release. The idea is pacification, — to bring the Divine mind around to a benevolent posture toward the supplicant; to present one's self in such a position as to insure commiseration on the part of God. Now, God is not won over to a favorable mood and a merciful temper by our supplications. Our pleading does not make His heart tender toward us; His heart is always tender toward us. Prayer is not a cry of distress to a Christian; its language is not a scream of fear: it is lark-like; it mounts to heaven with a song in its mouth. Its home on the earth is amid fragrance. It has dwelt amid the clover-heads of promise. It has nested all its life amid odors and sweet growths. God has given it so much on the earth for which to be thankful, made the ordinary things of life so full of blessing and happiness, that whenever for a single moment God's Spirit gives it a winged power to mount upward, it thinks of nothing so quickly as its grati-

tude. When one truly understands God, he has delight in prayer. He is so good, it is a joy to be near Him. Whenever the human mind feels the touch of His contact with it, it must be happy. There is a restful quality in God that He imparts to those who come nigh Him, provided that they yield themselves trustfully to Him. The sobbing and tremblings of the soul are all gone when He has gathered it lovingly down into His bosom.

O the bosom of God, what love there is in it! what mercies, what sympathies, what tenderness, what yearnings to bestow itself upon the wretched and the undeserving! what holy ache and longing for children, and a crying out and searching for those not of its own likeness, to adopt unto itself! This is God. This is the blessed Being we are to worship and love.

You see, friends, God is *fulness*. There is and can be no scantness and meagreness about the Deity. He is large Himself, and does everything in a large way. He cannot exhaust any power or tire any faculty. There is nothing too ponderous and nothing too delicate for Him to do. He can make a world or a flower, a man or an insect, with equal facility. Look at the earth: what a profusion of objects, what a variety of forms, what multiplication of shapes, no two alike; what myriads of creatures, separate and diverse! Count the leaves on a single tree; multiply that into a

grove, and a grove into a landscape. Take a square yard of sod, and number the spires of grass; enlarge the square yard to an acre, the acre into a township, and that into the whole earth. Take the microscope and view the insect world, and see how the earth teems with swarming life. Every leaf has its inhabitant, every spire of grass its tenant; and this is true in respect to all the Divine doings. God is too abundant with beams, too intense and fervid, to go forth in single rays. He rolls Himself out into His universe in waves of light, in oceans of effulgence. He throws out existence as a flower does perfume. Life is only the odor of His nature. For Him to exist is to create. I do not conceive of God as in action when He creates. He creates in His repose. He creates at rest. It is no task for Him to give birth to things. He does not labor in administration. It is no more toil for Him to beget than it is for a fountain, fed by perennial and inexhaustible springs, to overflow its mossy rim. Why, within, deep down in His eternal capacity, are such sources of life that the creative and creating overflow is continually pressing upward toward the surface of occasion and opportunity.

This is the source and reason of all these worlds that hang suspended around us in the blue ether. This is the parent of all this swarm of feathery life that hide in thickets or whiten the far-off

islands of the sea with their dense array of snowy plumes. This is the origin of these myriads of insects, these little earth-toilers, beneath our feet; so thick that they make the very sod of our fields animate. These millions innumerable, these ranks and orders of atomic existence, which science can neither compute nor classify, — whence came they, or how came they to be born? They have all been breathed out of God; they have come from the vapor of His nostrils; they have been born of a power that would be unconscious of the results of its own working, so vast is it, were it not as infinite in its goodness and intelligence as it is in its energy. They are God's; all of them the children of a Power that "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

These are the things, the effects, the results, which indicate the Divine nature. Beware of having a meagre, a little, a minute God. In order to have anything else, make your mind large by large thoughts of Him. Make your mind telescopic, not microscopic; have the field of vision wide, the object-glass large. Many people *minimize* God. They think of Him in such a way as to reduce Him to the smallest possible form and shape in which Deity can live.

This text was intended to prevent such an error of judgment. It drew an outline of God in His beneficence, in His willingness to give good things

to men. And when we search for this God in outline, in order to measure His stature, lo! we cannot find the white marks that represent His stature and proportions; for they are outside, not alone of what we ordinarily imagine God to be, but outside of what we can either ask or think. Now, my people, when we come to search for the source of this beneficence on the part of God, what do we find it to be? I answer, Love, — "love divine, all love excelling," as the poet sings. When John turned his inspired vision toward the Deity; when, spiritually assisted in apprehension, he looked at God, — he saw what? Why, something like this. He saw power, — power columnar and colossal; power which had for its pedestal the universal frame of things, — nothing less wide being adequate to supply it with a base, — and so high in its projection upward that the remoter stars seemed only the worshippers standing with veiled and sobered faces around the footstool. He looked again, and saw wisdom directing this power, — directing it easily; putting upon its enginery of forces every needed check; pervading it with intelligence, so that it became a law unto itself, and made its every evolution proper, and its every action harmonious with all that was within and without itself. He looked for the third time, and saw truth dwelling within this almightiness, as your soul dwells within your body; crystallizing its otherwise cloudy and opaque

substance into absolute purity and clearness, so that in the presence of this Divine essence and being the "very heavens are unclean." But when he came to look for the fourth time, what did he behold? Hushed be the voice that tells it! Above power, higher than wisdom, which makes it intelligent, — supplying to the one its crown, and its moral quality to the other; giving to otherwise unattractive truth its glow and warmth; poured over all; constituting all, as the sun does our earthly days, — he saw love; and so much was it above all other elements and attributes of Divinity, that it alone was able to characterize Divinity, it alone could furnish him with a descriptive name for God; and so, summing all up, he exclaimed, "God is *love*."

Now, I dare say that there are many in this congregation who have never come to God. I do not use the phrase, "come to God," grossly and objectively, as when we speak of one man coming to another man: I use it subjectively, I use it spiritually. I mean that you have never come to God in your mind, your thoughts, your impulses, your hopes; you have never put your soul in communion with Him, never made Him your anchor in storms of trouble, your shield in peril, your staff in weakness, your hope in despair. You have seen times when you wished you had Him thus connected with you; when you envied those who had,

when you inwardly decided that you would one day be thus connected with Him yourself; but you held back, — something held you back. Perhaps it was lack of what you supposed to be needed knowledge. Friend, you need no knowledge in order to go to God. The babe is not learned, and yet it goes to the mother's breast for nourishment. It has no knowledge but the knowledge of a felt want. It cannot express even that, save by its action. Well, so I say to you, you need no knowledge in order to go to God, but a felt want of Him. Go to Him as a babe goes to the mother's breast for nourishment. You need not speak a word; you may not be old enough to speak spiritually yet. Let your *action* speak for you. God understands that language, friend. Do you remember the poor publican's prayer? Yes. Well, what was it? "God be merciful to me, a sinner." No, that was not the poor publican's prayer. It was his smiting on his breast which was his prayer. The inward sense of guilt, of shame, of remorse; the inward want and craving of his soul for pardon, for peace, for communion with a merciful God, — that was the publican's prayer. It was the movement of his soul, and not of his lips, that God saw and recognized. And who doubts but that the Deity stooped from His high throne in the heavens, lifted the soul of the poor publican into His bosom, and satisfied its craving for mercy

and help with an eternal supply of His comforting grace ?

Or it may be you do not go to God because of fear. Your guilt makes you timid, your ill-desert makes you shrink. Well, I admit this is natural to an unrenewed mind, a mind that cannot understand God. O that the Holy Spirit may come down into your mind, and renew it in knowledge of spiritual things, that you may understand God; for then you would see that God is to you in the midst of your guilt what the solid shore is to a shipwrecked man! Does that poor sailor *fear the shore?* Fear the shore! Why, it is his only *hope.* If he can only touch that, he is safe. Well, so it is between you who are in the midst of many fears because of your sins and God. God is the shore. Reach Him, and you are safe. The waves of His mercy are rolling you in toward Him to-day. You can feel them lift you. What strength there is underneath you! How they heave your soul up and roll it on out of peril, out of fear, toward the white line of waiting angels! Do not resist, friend. Let the Almighty, who is doing for you more than you dare ask or think, lift you up out of the waves of death, and cause you to stand, a rescued soul, on the shore of Everlasting Life.

SERMON VII.

GOOD HEALTH, — ITS RELIGIOUS RELATION.

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." — 1 Tim. v. 23.

PAUL, in this passage, has turned physician. Timothy — a man peculiarly dear to him, a man he loved, a man most useful in the work of the ministry — is threatened with sickness. He may have worked too hard, he may have been careless in his diet, he may have inherited a weakly organization from his parents, — whatever the cause, he was getting in a bad way physically. He was in danger of breaking down, and it was very important to Paul, and very important to the cause of Christ, that he should not break down. Health was everything then, as it is now, to a man in the ministry. A sick minister, like a sick soldier, is so much clear loss to the army, — one man less, when the ranks must be kept full. Paul heard how things stood with Timothy. He felt anxious about him. He was very dear to him personally. He calls him "his son in the gospel." He was a valuable helper. He was filling a place that no one could fill as well as himself. His retirement would be a great loss, his death a public calamity.

Paul felt all this, — felt it in both his judgment and his affections, — and his anxiety finds expression in the words of the text. It is the only prescription, of which we have any knowledge, backed up by apostolic authority. The great thought suggested by this passage is the value of good health.

This is the time of year in which every thoughtful person is reorganizing himself; laying down rules for the better government of his life, making resolutions, and forming his plans for the coming year. And I preach this sermon to you to-day in order that, in the multitude of your reflections, you may not overlook the one essential thought upon which, more than upon anything else, the consummation of your wishes and the successful issue of your plans depend, namely, good health.

The trouble which meets a clergyman at the very outset of such a discourse is, that an audience is apt to overlook its *religious* character. One of the worst forms of infidelity, as it exists in our times, is that which denies the divine origin and use of the body. Any application of the Gospels to mental states is considered by the most obtuse as eminently fit and proper; but when you proceed to make an application of the same truth to bodily states, the reception is altogether different. The one discourse is received with favor, as full of spirituality; the other with very much the same feeling as you might give to a secular

treatise on a secular theme. Do not say that this is not so, for I know that it is so. And I dare to say that a great many of you who are among the most anxious for spiritual results have already said in your own heart, "I wish he had taken some other topic to-day,— repentance, or depravity, or regeneration, or something with a little closer spiritual application." Well, friends, I do not doubt that you are honest in your aspiration, any more than I do that you are all wrong in it. And I hope to show you, before I close, that this matter of health and the duty of conserving it has as close application spiritually as any other in the whole Bible. A matter which the Holy Ghost did not deem insignificant when it had reference to only *one* person cannot be unworthy of our prayerful attention when it has direct application to a thousand, scores of whom are as important to the cause of the gospel to-day as Timothy was in his time.

And, first, I wish to present to you a few considerations touching the rank and dignity the body holds and has in the spiritual economy.

I know that the Bible speaks of the "vile body"; and when you regard it as the home of sin, as the avenue along which temptation marches to besiege the soul, as subject to quick mortality, as no more in duration beside the soul than a falling star is beside the great luminary which abides as the source of permanent illumination to the sky, —

when you regard it in this light, I say, it is vile. Even the flesh can be so debauched as to become repulsive to the senses. Viewed merely as an animal, man under the influence of sin becomes unseemly. But when the body is considered as the handiwork of God, as expressly designed and put together as a habitation for the soul, as its companion during all its earthly existence; when you look upon it as an instrument to minister to the joy and growth of the mind, as the agent that performs duties and produces effects whose influence eternity alone can measure, — when you consider the body in this light, I say, it is not vile, but noble; not debased, but exalted. The first condition of all correct thinking upon this subject is a frank, open, and grateful recognition of God as the creator and preserver of your body. And this should be done, not in a general sort of a way, but with the same precision and fulness with which you conceive of God as the source of your intellectual powers. The mind is no more the child of God than is the body. Memory and conscience are no more a Divine gift than are the muscles. It is as wicked to sin against the stomach as it is to sin against the judgment. It is as fully a matter of duty to keep the blood pure as it is the imagination. In brief, you have no right before your Maker to rule your body out of that circle within whose circumference moral

obligation is included, any more than you have to rule your soul out of the same circle. And when any exhortation comes to you out of the Scripture touching the government and conservation of your bodily powers and faculties, you should not pass it by as you would a secular direction, you should not regard it as something to be rejected or accepted as suits your taste, your appetites, or your convenience, but you should regard it as imperative, as coming from an inspired source, and as binding upon you as any other direction or command in the Scripture. For every injunction of God is absolute, and allows to the party addressed no option. Now, I hope you all admit this; for it is as true as any thought I have ever suggested to you. Let us now consider the subject of *health* viewed in several of its many connections.

In the first place, of all natural blessings it is the most personal. It comes closer home to the consciousness. It requires no education to understand it. It interprets itself. The beggar and the king, the young and the old, give it the same spontaneous recognition. God's gifts are not always thus simple. They come at times in disguise, at times in a germinal state. Culture and years can alone fitly interpret them. But health comes to us like a piece of bread from a mother's hand. It is God's direct communication with us; and the mouth that is fed by the gift can bless the Giver.

Nor is health less intimately connected with our happiness. It is not merely one of many elements; it is the very foundation of happiness, the sole soil in which naturally it can sprout. I pray you all to bear in mind — that you may apprehend the true connection of health with God's design — that the happy state is that one in which God desires and designed all his creatures should be. A cross man is an ungodly man; that is, he is practically in opposition to God's will. Surliness is one form of impiety. Now, a sick man, if he is not sick enough to be frightened, is very apt to be a cross man. When a man's nerves are on fire with neuralgia, his muscles wrung and twisted with rheumatism, and his stomach possessed with the devil of dyspepsia, he is as one put into the very strait-jacket of temptation. If he can keep his tranquillity, his suavity, his gentleness, he ought to be canonized. Evil has him at an immense disadvantage. He fights against the heaviest kind of odds. But it is not difficult to be happy in health. When the muscles act so easily that you do not feel them move, when the nerves thrill with pleasure at the transmission of thought, when the stomach does its work so well that you know not when it toils or rests, when the blood is pure as old wine, and the pulses even and regular in their beat as a Waltham watch, then it is not difficult

to be good, then happiness is natural. I have no doubt that at least one half of the misery and unhappiness in the world comes from ill-health. One of the first things I noted in Nature was, that all *her* children are happy. I have watched all manner of bird and beast known to our Northern clime, — watched them unseen, — and whether they played upon the sands, sported in the water, or sailed upon the wind, in every motion, in every turn of wing and limb, they revealed their happiness. Health leads them to such happiness as they are permitted by their capacity to feel. From nature I have turned to man, from the wilderness I have come to the city; and what have I seen? What confinement, what restlessness, what discontent, what loathings, what weariness and anguish, what suspension of natural powers, what antagonism betwixt those that were still operant! And I have said to myself, "Disease, thou art a knife whose edge is at the throat of happiness, whose point is in the very vitals of man's desire!"

I ask you to observe, in order to better realize the goodness of God and your duty, that He not only gave to man a body which, in the perfection of the whole or the harmonious union of all the parts, suggests absence of pain and presence of pleasure, but He has also surrounded us with much that fulfils its object best when it most ministers to our happiness. More than once,

when about to lie down to sleep, have I gazed out upon the moonlit waters tinged with soft silver from shore to shore, listened to the low plash of waves at my feet, gazed at the dark outline of the woods suggestive of repose, and said, as I closed my eyes, "Never can the earth seem so lovely to me again as I have seen it to-night"; but when I woke, and my opening eyes beheld the rising day, — the clouds tinged with gold, softened here and there into amber; the fog no longer cold and gray, but rolling its waves of crimson across the lake; heard the drip of the resinous gums, the same musical dash of waves on the shore, and caught the sweet scent of the lilies borne on the moist breeze from the far-off bay, — I have said, "Nature, thou dost indeed change, but it is from glory unto glory, and thy loveliness increaseth with the number of thy days."

But what is Nature in all her loveliness to the eye that is glazed with fever? What are her sights and sounds to one shut up within the sick-chamber? What is the lusciousness of all the fruits, whether of tropic or temperate clime, when the appetite is gone? What can all the surroundings suggest to the mind that is frenzied and delirious? See, then, how, as in perfect music, there is no room for a single discordant note. So in God's design in nature and man, whose perfect expression is sweeter and more sublime than any

minstrelsy, there is no room for illness, no provision for disease.

But observe, further, health is no more important, no more essential, touching our enjoyment than it is in respect to our usefulness.

A person's usefulness is that result reached by the exercise of all his faculties. Weaken the faculties, and you to the same extent diminish his usefulness. This is a truism, and needs no expansion; you accept it at the utterance. Still, one or two reflections may not be amiss.

The noblest ambition any breast can cherish is that of usefulness. In the scale of Divine estimation it lifts one to the seat of royalty. Christ made it the test of one's fitness to be exalted. He who would be the greatest must become the servant of all. The extent to which a capable person can serve mankind is almost incalculable. Every hour is an occasion, every moment an opportunity. He can scarcely take a step and not meet some duty. Take a mother of several children when of tender years; I mean a mother that is a mother, — a mother who does not farm out her little ones on Irish help, but is a nurse and companion to them herself, — take such a mother, I say, and when is she ever done with her sweet, influential work? When does the opportunity for usefulness cease? When is her presence, her eye, her voice, not needed? Moreover,

if she be a wise and good woman, who can make good her absence to those children? What voice, what touch, whose face, is like hers? You know that there is none. No other can take the place, discharge the duties, that God has appointed for a mother. The law that regulates the emission and recession of influence is absolute; it partakes of the nature of a decree. But observe how ill-health thwarts all the Divine intention touching maternal influence. Let the mother of a household be taken sick, and what a change comes over the family! what an interruption of wise customs, what irregularities, what letting down of rules, what unruly habits, what neglect, what confusion, follow! The family affairs now move on like a ship that is not steered. The hand has deserted the helm, and, undirected by the authority of one controlling will, the poor vessel veers, tacks, sways, and sails in irregular and fruitless circles. Then it is that you perceive how large is the sphere that a mother fills, how potent and salutary is her influence, how necessary is her bodily presence. Now, you cannot, any of you, say that this illustration is exaggerated. And in the light of it, which reveals everything in its due proportion, I ask you to note and tell me, if there is any natural blessing greater, any duty more imperative, than that of health. Now, consider the multitude of mothers that are sickly, — women

dragging themselves around with only half the vital force and strength they absolutely need in order to discharge the duties of their position, — consider that lack of health means loss of influence, and of influence, too, worth more than gold to us all, and declare if it is not time for us to confess that good health has a spiritual connection that we must not any longer ignore. I hope to live to see the day when any indiscretion, any carelessness, touching the preservation of health shall be publicly and privately regarded as sin.

I will not, I dare not, trust myself to speak of that other subject lying close to this, that darker fringe on the borders of this piece of sackcloth. A mist of doubt, of fear, of shivering apprehension rises before me as I write, — a mist peopled with infantile faces, faces half formed, faces that belong to what must be nameless, for we know not what yet to call them, — faces of the unborn; a horrid mist, I say, peopled with infirmities, with diseases, with complaints that float in shadow now, yet destined to be clothed in flesh and blood, whose voice shall serve only to prolong the moan and suffering of the ages; a mist full of cries and agonies, in which the weakness and inability of the present are repeated in the person of weakly offspring. Shall God never deliver the world from these? Must the ages forever go groaning along, piling up in horrible

repetition that which should never be repeated? Is the present forever to curse the future with its fatal gift of sickness? Have we any right before God or man to burden the shoulders of five generations with the slow-operating penalty of our carelessness and indiscretion? Have we no cemeteries? What nobler use is there known to reasoning, to thoughtful beings than to make their peaceful slopes and quiet recesses the burial-places of our weaknesses forever. I honor the man and woman who, knowing that in them are diseases and weaknesses that should never be repeated, can fold their infirmities about them, as the ancient Romans wrapped themselves in their mantles when about to die, and say to their taints of blood and passions, Come, ye evil ministries that thwart God's good design in birth, — come, lie down with us, and let the curse He visited through us on our rash parents be buried forever in our graves.

I speak for those who sleep in cradles to-day, and for that multitude unknown as yet to life, — the children of the future. I speak for those who know not and will never know who pleaded for them, but whose lives will take tone and character from decisions made here to-day. Never with greater sincerity have I ever spoken to you upon any subject than I am now speaking to you upon this. Never was I impelled by a more urgent

conviction of duty. If no force can be found in the Scripture to counteract the physical degeneracy of the age, then, for one, I say, better for the race were it remanded back into primeval barbarism. If men and women can go on committing slow suicide, as hundreds are now doing; if a man, for the sake of adding one or two thousand to his income, can deliberately run the risk of fever, insanity, or death; if a woman, by dress and diet and manner of life, can outrage every rule and principle of health; — if these things can be done until they become the fashion and the habit, and no one else will join me in saying it, then I will stand alone, and at every opportunity characterize it by its right name; and it shall be called before men, as it is known to be in the judgment of high Heaven, a dark, deep, and damning sin, — a sin which God does not wink at, as He did formerly, when the rules and conditions of health were not so well ascertained as now, but which He punishes, as your pains and aches and infirmities testify. What right have you, sir, to take that pure blood in your veins, which God designed to be a source of strength and happiness to you, and make it thick with impurities, and a source of weakness and corruption? What right have you to overtax those muscles; to make those nerves like so many red-hot wires under the skin; to destroy the exquisite mechanism of the stom-

ach, whose structure no one can understand and not be amazed; to take that brain, that reflection of God, where judgment and reason, imagination and all the affections, live, and by overwork reduce it to its minimum of power, inflame it with fevers, or reduce it to the flaccid state of inanition? Is this temple of the Holy Ghost, is this immortal spirit ministering at its altar, to be treated in this way, and God not affix blame somewhere? And if somewhere, where, I pray, save upon the man or woman or youth that does it? I tell you, friend, if you are not careful, if you do not repent and change your course, your body shall rise in judgment to condemn you. The poor, neglected, and abused child of God shall come to your side, and before its Father's face and yours rehearse the catalogue of its wrongs. It shall tell how it was treated, and angels, who regarded it as one of the most beautiful and complete of all God's creations, shall be amazed. It shall tell how it was cramped and pinched and distorted; how it was overtaxed and worked like a slave; how it was burnt with fevers that might have been avoided, and flung into great caldrons of rheumatic fire; how the wicked imagination sapped its powers, and lust brutalized its sensibilities; how life was made to be one long agony, and caused the very corruption of the grave to be anticipated: and many a man who has been morally upright, who has been

neither a thief nor a murderer, shall then discover that the great sin of his life was his neglect and abuse of his body. What he thought was, at the worst, only an injury to himself, he shall then see was a continued affront put upon God.

I have now discussed health in relation to our happiness and usefulness. Allow me now, before I close, to speak of the relation which it sustains to our spiritual life and development.

In all our religious undertakings the body is the companion of the soul. We cannot read, or hear, or sing, or go to the house of God without it. Sickness cuts one off from a thousand privileges which are the very food of the soul; sickness means prostration of energies, a lapse of influence, a sudden and complete stoppage of all those forceful currents through which a man pours himself for the good of others. A disturbance in a few vocal organs here in my throat, resulting in a loss of voice, and I should be instantly excluded from that sphere of effort in which it has been God's will to place me, and in which, apparently, I can best serve Him. The margin which lies between usefulness and incapacity is in many instances frightfully narrow. The tension to which you must put the string of a violin in order to bring forth its highest and purest note is that next to breaking. The slightest possible turn, and the melody ends with the discordant snap. I have

already taxed your patience, and yet how much in connection with this subject remains unsaid, how many of its relations untouched. Possibly I may hereafter speak further upon it. But, be this as it may, I have, I trust, said enough to show you that the matter of health has religious relations; that it bears directly on your duties and growth in Christ; and that a graver responsibility than you have been accustomed to think, rests upon you all. For one, henceforth, even more than in the past, I shall hold my life as God's gift to me, as something too sacred to trifle with, too precious to barter for temporary gain or applause. Health shall be to me as the pivot upon which happiness, usefulness, and all right views of God turn. So far as He grants unto me to order events, I hope to die in the fulness of years and the plenitude of peace, born of the thought that I have slighted no gift, abused no trust, nor opposed in practice His divine wish and will.

SERMON VIII.

REASONS WHY SO MANY MEN IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES REMAIN UNCONVERTED.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear." — Rev. iii. 22.

ONE of the wonders of to-day is the number of well-disposed, intelligent, warm-hearted men that are not professed Christians. With so many churches and preachers and teachers, with so many agents and agencies, it seems at the first thought unaccountable that so many men and women remain unconverted. The question that rises in the mind of every man as he thinks of this state of things is, Why is it? How does it come about that it is so?

This question I shall attempt to answer. My theme is, "Why do not men come to God?"

As I pondered this question, seeking to find a true answer, the causes seemed to arrange themselves in two classes: the one class I designate as the outside causes, and the other as the inside causes; by this I mean that the causes which keep these men from coming to God exist both outside themselves, — that is to say, in others, — and also in themselves; and this is the division I have adopted.

The first reason I shall mention why this large

class of men do not come to God, is because the subject is not *clearly*, *forcibly*, and *judiciously* presented to them.

Religion labors under this tremendous disadvantage before a popular audience, that its claims are not well argued. We have in our pulpits comparatively few men who state a thing clearly. They have not trained themselves to do it. They have persuaded themselves that their usefulness lies in another direction. Webster would make a statement so that when the statement was made the question was half argued. Lincoln would put a proposition so clearly that it argued itself. Lyman Beecher would announce divine principles in such a way that no one could doubt them. Religion never depended on preaching so much as to-day, nor was it ever more poorly served. Religion needs in every generation a restatement. Its claims, in order to be admitted, must be heard by the people, and heard, too, set forth in such clearness and force that no one can deny them. The tongues of fire which came down and sat upon the early disciples were symbolic of that greatest of all agencies to forward the gospel cause. The Church needs and lacks to-day tongues of power. The terms of salvation need to be proclaimed so that all must and shall hear. Jesus needs to-day men strong in great utterance, mighty in speech.

But even when you find a preacher who preaches

clearly and forcibly, he often does not preach *judiciously.* He is not calm, sagacious, well balanced. He mars what he says well by saying many unnecessary things. He weakens what he insists upon by insisting upon too much. Essentials and non-essentials have equal prominence in his discourse. His extravagances cause him to be less esteemed than he should be. He fails to exert upon men that peculiar influence which is easily exerted by one who has won from them the confession that he is a man of good judgment. I suspect, friends, that much of the impotence of preaching arises from one of these three causes: the claims of God upon the soul are not stated *clearly, forcibly,* or *judiciously.* In other words, the claims of religion are weak, because weakly stated. The unconverted need to be impressed, and are not, because the pulpits are weak in those elements of strength from which, as streams from their sources, great mental and spiritual impressions come.

The second cause I mention is the difference of views among religious teachers.

"When pilots disagree, the crew will desert," is an old adage; and when ministers fall out one with another touching the meaning of the Bible, they weaken its influence and their own upon the average public mind. But the worst result of such disagreement is, that it leads to disagreement and antagonism among their respective peoples,

begets unnecessary and useless discussions, and so serves to draw the minds of many interested persons from the vital point, which is their own salvation, and to direct them to other and useless themes. Our churches are filled with discussions that will never benefit any one. Sabbath-school teachers devote their time to the investigation of points of Old Testament history that have no more connection with the conversion of their scholars than the battle of Marathon has with the reformation of drunkards. Doctrines are debated, principles of interpretations decided, chronological difficulties attacked, discussions started, of no use whatever in converting a soul. Precious time is thus wasted, energies misspent, and intellectual antagonisms begotten, which will be strong to divide the hearts of men when they have reached maturity. Over against this method of preaching and teaching I set another, the entire aim of which is to converge men's thoughts and bring their scattered convictions to one focus; and that focus shall be the conviction of the soul of sin, and its immediate conversion to holiness. We waste our moral forces instead of economizing them. We weaken the claims of religion upon the soul, first, by weakly presenting them; and, secondly, by distracting the inquirer's mind from the real point at issue between it and God.

The third and last of these outside causes I shall

mention is this: religion is advertised wrongly, both by the verbal description given to it and the examples of those who profess it.

I can only state these propositions, friends, for I have not the time to argue them at length. This I will say, touching the injury done to religion by the faulty examples of those who profess it.

Now, every one desires to be happy. The condition of heaven is the ambition of earth. What the angels have men long to acquire. Religion as a source of happiness comes to men, therefore, with a great natural advantage in its favor; for men crave from instinct the very experience it is calculated to bestow. But how is it in point of fact? Why, the fact is, it is not made to seem to the popular mind as the source of happiness. Men naturally look to its examples to apprehend its true character, and they are not made to apprehend it in that way. On the other hand, the impression made upon them is often precisely the reverse. They are thus repelled from, instead of being attracted to it; and religion must approach them ever after at a great disadvantage.

Now, I wish to say this, as my testimony to all of you who are not as yet religious: religion does make a person happy. The moods and tempers it fosters are those of happiness. It lightens one's burdens, consoles him in sorrow, blesses him with

a great hope, and fills him with peace. I suppose that I am ordinarily gifted with the several sources of strength. Perhaps I can endure as much, without sinking down, as most men; but I am free to say that I have seen times when religion saved me from sinking. It did not create, but it assisted, the patience derived from nature. It supplied me with moods and feelings which are essential to soundness of judgment, and thereby kept me from disastrous errors. It gave to my feelings a temper which took the edge off of enmity and made the smiter powerless; and, above all, upheld me with the hope of ultimate victory. It has made me stronger, happier, and better, and it gives me great pleasure to bear this testimony in its favor to-day. Indeed, young men, the practice of religion never fails one. You may learn a trade, hoping thereby to gain wealth, and you may fail; you may study law, hoping thereby to become famous, and you may never see the fame you desire; you may aspire to the honors of the forum, and the applause of the populace may be withheld: but no one ever studied the principles of holiness and acted up to his knowledge, and failed of his reward. He who does business for God can never be bankrupt. All else may fail us, but the pleasures of Christian hope and the consolation of Christian faith can never be taken from us. The virtuous man can lose nothing, for his virtues are his reward.

I have now passed in swift review several of what might be styled the *outside* causes why you who are not religious do not come to God, and I submit to you, as candid men, if I have not dealt fairly with you in my statement. I appeal to you to say whether I have not kept the facts of the case in view and stated things impartially. Now I wish to speak of the other side of the subject. I have spoken of the *outside,* I now wish to speak of the *inside,* causes that keep you from God. I have asked you to look at others ; I now ask you to look within yourselves. Shut your eyes, friend, for a moment ; look no longer at the faults of your neighbor ; look at your own soul, and see if within that cannot be found causes, fearfully potent, calculated to prevent you from coming to God.

The first cause I mention is this : you have imbibed wrong views of God.

These wrong views of the Divine nature and government, being received and adopted, have led you to adopt wrong views touching your own nature and the proper government of your lives. If you understood God, you would understand what would be, in the very nature of things, demanded of you. A weakly, effeminate conception of God leads to a weakly, effeminate morality on the part of the believer. An impotent government begets rebellious subjects. A fickle father will be overrun by unruly children. I protest, therefore,

against any further increase of those weak and sentimental views of God, already too prevalent, as calculated to remove from the public mind some of the great parental causes of virtue, as calculated to lull the consciences of men into a lethargy, equally dangerous to the person and the state.

Now, these wrong notions of God you have imbibed not alone from the faulty expression of others, but also because you have not been earnest and candid in your investigation of spiritual things. You have not conducted your inquiry like a student who wished only to ascertain the plain unvarnished truth, but rather as a debater who studies a question for the purpose of being able to present one side of it successfully. To this end you have read only those books favorable to one side, heard only those speakers who think as you thought or wanted to think; heard evidence *pro* and *con*, not as a judge, but as a partisan. In short, you have been thoroughly prejudiced from beginning to end.

Now, I ask you to tell me, as one candid man tells another, face to face and honestly, could you have possibly selected a worse way to carry on your investigation, provided your desire is to arrive at the truth? Do you think that Truth, immortal and divine, the very embodiment of sincerity and candor, will ever unfold her treasures to one who sets out to find her only in order to avoid her? If

your object was to become a religious partisan, I admire your cunning. The method was in harmony with the ambition. But if you ever desire to know God, to understand His nature and ways, to master those principles of virtuous conduct by the practising of which you become like Him, then have you taken the very course, beyond all others, most likely to thwart you in your desire. Continue in the way you have begun, and you will, beyond peradventure, become a partisan, but you will never become a Christian. Only those souls who, forgetful of earthly considerations, walk with uplifted faces and eyes fastened upon the stars, ever behold the light of truth, ever feel the warmth of the divine glow.

The second cause existing within yourselves is this: even those efforts which you have made in all honesty of purpose have been under the direction of a wrong impression of what is to be done.

We will suppose that you honestly desired reformation, honestly desired higher moods and nobler impulses. We will suppose that you had come to a point — to which almost every man comes, at least, once in his life — standing at which you saw the evil of your lives, saw that inevitable disaster morally awaited you if you continued to go on as you had been going, and said to yourself, "This thing must stop. I am not living as I should live. I must make a change, or I am undone."

Now we will suppose, I say, friend, that you had come to such a point of conviction as that; saw that something must be done, and made an honest effort to do it. Now I dare say you failed; you fought nobly, but you did not win. How often have I had men tell me of such periods and experiences! They would say, "Mr. Murray, if ever a man tried to become good I did at that time. I hated myself, and I tried to escape from myself; but I could n't. I hated my way of thinking and feeling; I strove to escape from my impure imaginations, as angels might strive to escape from a cloud of pursuing devils; I hated liquor and all the low, dirty indulgences to which it led, and God knows I strove to deliver myself: but I failed, and here I am, to-day, a moral bankrupt and a wreck."

Well, friend, your failure is not mysterious. There is nothing unaccountable about it. If you had come to me then, and told me what you were about to attempt, and told me, in answer to my inquiry, what resources were at your command, I should have told you in an instant that your resources were insufficient. I should have said at once, "That is too little powder to drive a ball the distance you intend to shoot." You failed because you went to work the wrong way; you did not start right. You set out to shoot a fall before you got your boat straight with the current,

and the result was that the hissing waters caught the keel, and you went down to the brink side on, and you and your boat were sucked under like a chip. Your error was this: you said, "I am tired of sour apples, I will henceforth raise nothing but sweet ones on my trees." And you might have done it — you know how — by grafting in a new variety into the old trees; but instead of grafting in a new and stronger principle of sweet life, you said, "I will make these old sour things sweet by pruning them. I will hew down this wart, I will cut off half these limbs, I will dress down the tops, I will put good mulching around these old scabby roots, and so make next year's apples sweet." Well, what was the result? Why, you never had so many nor so sour apples in your life as you had that next summer. The more you pruned and sawed and mulched, the more the ugly old things thrived, and, seeing it, you gave it up in despair.

And that, friends, is all the good that an honest attempt to substitute morality for piety ever does. It brings the man at last to despair. When he finds what he cannot do unassisted of God, he may perhaps try a better way. When he finds that nursing the old devilish principle in him will not make it a holy principle, then perhaps he may go to Him who alone is able to take the evil out of him, and substitute the good, and ask Him to do it.

Your failure, then, resulted from this: you needed a new heart, a new nature, and instead of resolving to get that you attempted to patch up the old one. The stream was dirty because the fountain was foul; and you went to work with the filters of your good resolution to make the stream pure, but never thought of the fountain from which every drop of the water you were striving to purify came, and which, as you bailed and filtered, far down below was growing more and more corrupt all the while. You see why you failed. You see that it was a foregone conclusion that you would fail. You never had a chance of success. Let me exhort you to try again. From this explanation of the causes of your defeat take new courage and make under better auspices another effort. This time start right. Begin by getting a new heart. Fling the old one away, and ask God for a new one. If you ask, "What power has He over me?" I respond, "He has at least as much power over us all as the man I employ to graft my trees has over those trees." And yet that laborer will take a tree that bears to-day sour apples and make it bear three years from now sweet ones. What a low estimate you must have of the power of God if you think He is not able to do as much with the trees He has made and planted as I can with trees I never made, but only bought! If I can change them,

who will say He cannot change you? Try it, friend. Ask Him to do it. Ask Him to graft you with a higher order of life, that your fruitfulness may henceforth be spiritually sweet and no longer bitter. Take your Bible, that book in which He has written out all the principles and methods of Divine arboriculture, and do just what He has therein told you to do, and my word for it, you will find that His words are verity and His goodness passing description.

The third cause why men do not come to God is this: they discuss more than they do.

Some people are forever inquiring. They are constantly thinking upon and investigating the subject of religion, but they never reach any conclusion. They belong to that unhappy class of students whose studies never teach them anything. There is never any connection between their ideas and their conduct. Such people are found everywhere. I presume there are men and women in this audience who belong to this class. They are always deciding that they will decide, but they never do. This is one class.

Another class is made up of people who make discussion the refuge of their guilt. They debate in order that they may not decide. The moment you approach them upon the subject of personal religion, they engage you in discussion. They will argue, hour in and hour out, with you upon any

point but the one that has a personal application to themselves. They will discuss any doctrine, debate any truth, question every duty, deny any obligation, contained in the Bible; but beyond this they deliberately refuse to go. Regeneration, inability, election, the divinity of Christ, eternal punishment, — these are the questions they love. They are well informed; they have studied the method of salvation, but they have studied it only in order that they may not be saved.

Indeed, we are all too prone to debate. I am not sure that we who preach are not open to the charge of bad management in presenting the case intrusted to us to the public. It is possible to preach sermons, and very good ones, intellectually considered, too, that shall divert men from the cross. Disputatious men make poor preachers, if the object of preaching be to convert souls. I fear a great many of us preach to maintain our own views rather than to win men over to right ones. I have heard men preach in a tone and manner better calculated to make enemies than friends. Ignorant piety called it zeal, the bigots applauded it as courageous; but the unregenerate, the very ones his speaking should have won over and melted, got mad, and at the close of the sermon went home, not saying, "Well, perhaps the preacher is right and I wrong; I will go and hear him again any way," — no, they never said that,

but they went out of that church vexed and excited, saying, "I'll never go and hear that fellow preach again as long as I live."

Now, I call that poor preaching. I do not care how zealous the man is, nor how courageous, — although I could never see much courage in abusing people who can make no reply to you, — apply to it what terms you please, it is poor preaching. A preacher of the gospel is in the position of a herald who has been sent by a king to a province of rebellious subjects, not to punish them, but to conciliate and win them over to their allegiance again. To this end he is to use argument, entreaty, personal solicitation, great patience and tenderness. Paul had the true idea when he affirmed his desire to be "all things to all men," in order that he might save them. Now, let us imagine a herald sent forth, and he should begin his address in a way to offend the people and alienate them still more from the king; suppose that, instead of lessening, he should multiply points of difference between them and the sovereign, talk to them in such a way as to incense them, and lead them to reach a wrong conclusion touching the feelings of the king toward them, — I say, suppose a herald should adopt such a course, what would the king do? Why, he would instantly recall him. And when the herald had come into his presence I imagine that the king would say,

"Sir, I sent you out on a very delicate mission, and you have acted without delicacy or tact yourself. I sent you out to conciliate those estranged subjects, to show them their foolishness in trying to resist me, to enlighten their minds touching their own interests, to make them feel that I loved them still, and longed to have them become my loyal children once more. And what have you done, sir? You have acted as if you had been sent out by me to punish them, to proclaim my wrath and not my love, to multiply differences between us, and shut their ears to reason by offending their feelings. You have made it harder for my next herald to get their attention and bring them over to a right position toward me than if you had never gone. You are disgraced, sir."

I make no application of the principle, friends. I am not sure that any one is wise enough or good enough to make the application; I leave every one to do it for himself. All I say is, that the principle is correct, and therefore safe for the purpose of general inference; and the inference I make is this, that every caution should be used by clergymen and laymen alike, in their labors for Christ, not to offend and alienate the very ones they are sent to save. To make religion seem reasonable; to remove all obstacles from before slow-moving and wavering feet; to make all other points in the discussion appear trivial but the one point of per-

sonal salvation; to reduce the points of difference to a minimum and multiply the reasons for agreement to their maximum; to enlighten the beclouded understanding with gentle wisdom; to melt stony-heartedness by the very kindliness of your solicitation; to shame rudeness by your courtesy of speech; to make enemies admire and then love you; to proclaim salvation in such a way as to make it come to sinners as a supply of bread to starving men; to warn them of the coming condemnation unless they repent, with tears in your eyes, as a solicitous mother with streaming eyes warns her unruly son of his coming ruin if he does not drop his evil habits, — O friends, this is to preach the gospel. There is no other way, believe me; there is no other way.

I have spoken about the unnecessary multiplication of points of difference on the part of those who preach, as calculated to thwart the object of preaching; but this principle has application to those who are preached to as well as to those who preach. I turn, therefore, to you who are not yet reconciled to God, and give you this same caution.

The great point with you, friends, is not this or that doctrine, not whether you think and act as I do, not whether you agree or disagree with evangelical Christians, — the great point is this: Are you at peace with God? Do you think and feel as He wishes you to think and feel? Is your soul, is

your conscience, is your conduct, are you, in all your powers and faculties, in harmony with Him? That is the point. Do not make any reply to me; do not try to debate with me. I will not debate with you. The hour in which you now stand is too solemn, the responsibility it imposes too grave, the opportunity it offers too sublime and blessed, to be frittered away in discussion. Do not say, "I do not believe in regeneration." I waive all that. Do not say, "I don't think as you do about the divinity of Christ." I waive that, too. Do not say, "I don't believe in eternal punishment." I will not discuss that with you. Some other time; not now. If you say, "When?" I will tell you. I will talk to you about the doctrine of regeneration after you have once fully, penitently, prayerfully, yielded your hearts to the Divine Spirit, and permitted Him to do in it and for it whatever He can. Yield first, and talk afterward. I will discuss the divinity of Jesus when you have made an honest effort to live divinely yourself. I will discuss eternal punishment, if you shall then desire to do it, when you have once begun to live so as to incur no condemnation.

I leave, you see, the level of debate, and come down to the level of conduct. You are not afraid to meet me there, I trust. I leave the level of faith, and come down to that of practice. You and I do not fear that the ground will give way

beneath us, do we? I leave theory behind me, I refuse speculation, I throw away from me, as I would so many husks, all verbal differences and statements which would cause our minds to clash, and ask you as man to man, and as brother before a brother, How do you stand before God? are you right in your habits? are you right in your conduct? are you right in your soul?

I look abroad over this city, and I behold it as a battle-field on which two opposing armies stand, drawn out for war. The banners of the one are black, and the faces beneath are such as devils have; but the line is closely set, and its movement as of one man. Whether these masses advance or halt, one mind rules all. These are the forces of evil here.

Over against this solid, compact front I see another army, whose banners are white, and the faces of those who serve beneath are like the countenances of angels. But what do I behold? A long, close-shouldered line, deep with the depth of masses, each form in its appointed place, and the whole, as if moved along by one thought, in sublime puissance and irresistible might, with a tread that shakes the earth, and a cheer that presages victory, advancing upon the foe? No! I behold no such sight as that. I see this heavenly army broken up into groups, — some in array, some with arms idly stacked, some in open riot against oth-

ers. What are they doing? They are debating definitions of law; they are wrangling over constitutional principles; they are quarrelling about regimental lines; discussing questions of camp police, personal rectitude, and which is doing best the wish and will of the ring. One leader is slandering another leader, and half the privates are throwing stones at their respective captains.

And all the while the Devil laughs, and the black banners, in manifestation of their triumph, condense themselves in deeper gloom!

My friends, this thing must stop; and it will never stop until a public opinion is created to stop it. Do what you can to stop it yourself. The man that starts unnecessary discussion here in this city to-day, upon theological points, acts wrongly. Its direct tendency is to prevent the conversion of souls and the union of the moral and spiritual forces represented by no one church, but by all the churches. It serves to distract the thoughts of those who might otherwise become serious, and lead them into fruitless discussions. It tends to alienate hearts that would otherwise love each other.

But, whatever foolishness may prevail in the counsels of the Church touching these matters, I exhort you who have not yet come to God not to be diverted from the course of wisdom. The great point for you to decide does not concern creeds,

nor theological definitions, nor modes of Church government, nor distinctions of science; the great point with you is, "How do I stand with God?" Waive everything else. Go down to your homes and places of abode, with this thought alone in your mind, seeing on everything you look at these words: "How do I stand before God?"

SERMON IX.

KNOWING GOD.

"Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." — JOHN xiv. 8.

I WISH to speak to you touching the revelation of God the Father to man. What I have to say is not in the form of an argument or set discourse so much as in the way of criticism and suggestion. It is the outgrowth of personal meditation upon the nature and relations of the First Person of the Trinity, and may be regarded perhaps more in the character of notes or jottings than of a set address. My object is to quicken you into thought, to clear away wrong impressions, to assist you to clearer and fuller conceptions of God the Father, rather than to convince you of any particular truth, or confirm your present convictions upon any particular point.

Now, Christ came to reveal the Father unto us. In Him "God was manifest in the flesh." How manifest? you say. Even as a father is manifest in the son who looks just like him and acts just like him. The son whose every movement, every peculiarity of mood and temper and impulse, is like the sire manifests the sire. The father lives again in the boy. Well, God was thus manifest

in Christ. Jesus was human; but his moods, the temper of his mind, the impulses of his heart, were like God's. His thoughts, judgments, estimation of men and things, were precisely like God's. His moods, feelings, aspirations, sympathies, were truly Divine. Thus God was manifest in Him. And He could in truth say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." For what is it to see a person? Is it to see his body, his face, his outward, external embodiment? Or is it to see him most truly when you behold the working of his mind, the movements of his soul, the dispositions of his heart? The latter, you say. Well, so it was in the case of Christ. There was a sense in which He did not manifest God. Christ did not reveal God in His relation to every order of beings, but He did reveal Him in His relation to man. That was all He intended to do. This He did, did perfectly. In the feelings of Christ toward men, God is manifest in His feelings toward you. In His sympathies, His love, His compassionate regard for the sinful, Christ was the type of God. Where Christ was severe, the Father is severe. Where the Son was compassionate, the Father is compassionate. Do not fall into the error of supposing that Christ makes God compassionate. It is God's compassion that Christ embodies. He had no feelings of His own, as contrasted with God's. Jesus was only God in the flesh. Give the as-

sertion its literal significance, its full emphasis. The flesh limited the Divine sovereignty, but not the Divine disposition. The object of the incarnation as a revelation of God was to show us, not how God rules, how He creates, how He governs, but how He feels. The love, and not the sovereignty, of Jehovah appears in Christ.

This was what man needed, namely, a revelation of God's feelings towards Him. This revelation was given us in Christ. Type and symbol and prophecy were not enough. Conduct was needed, a real presence was needed. How God would act, how speak, how feel, when brought in actual contact with the guilty, the rebellious, the underserving, was the revelation men craved. The knowledge was given, the manifestation made, and the problem was, in the person of Christ, once and forever solved.

I submit, then, to you all, this proposition, that no one can know the Father who does not know the Son. You might as well expect to see your own face without looking into a mirror as to see God without looking at the reflection of Him given in the nature and conduct of Christ. I submit, also, this other proposition, that no one can know Christ until he becomes like Christ. Feeling can alone interpret feeling. You cannot know what hatred is until you hate some one. Then you know it in all the enormity of its ugliness.

None of the sensations can be taught out of books, nor can any of the higher moral qualities. To know what nobleness is you must be noble. Love is never known until you find yourself in the act of loving. You never know the deliciousness of warmth until the flush is on you. So I say, to know God you must know Christ; but you cannot know Christ until you become like Christ. You must have His moods, His temper of mind, His moral sweetness, His profound reverence for the Father, before you can know Him.

In Christ you find God, but you cannot even find Christ until you are in Christ. Now, then, all you who are students of the Divine nature, study it as revealed in Him who was the co-sharer of that nature. Remember, also, that no study of books, not even of the Bible, will give you the knowledge you crave. By no intellectual effort, by no mastery of texts, by no verbal proficiency, will this wisdom come to you. It will come, if at all, experimentally. It is not illogical therefore, but absolutely accurate, to say that the only real knowledge of God is a *heart knowledge.* It is only saying that the only true knowledge of water comes through tasting. If a man laughs at the one, he is bound to laugh at the other statement. Well, friend, taste God, and you will know what He is; sense Him through those spiritual faculties which were made by Him to hold, and do hold, the same relation to Him as the

ear does to sound or the eye to sight. Become Godlike and then you will know God, not before.

I have spoken of God's being known in Christ. But not alone is He known in Christ. He is known by other methods of appropriation. One mind sees Him more clearly, one soul senses Him more fully, than another; but both and all cannot be utterly blind to His presence and His glory, for he has advertised himself in characters both legible and permanent. It is with God as with a loved face, — wherever we look we see it. Permit me to point out a few of the many wrong methods of thought, which prevent the Deity from being a delight to us.

The first is, localizing Him in the wrong place.

I will ask you to localize God. Send out your thoughts after Him and find Him. Have you found Him? If so, where is He? "Away, far away, in heaven," you say. "Well, where is heaven?" I ask again. You cannot tell me; you can only say, "Away, far off, from here." When I asked you to find God, your thoughts jumped up into the air and went racing through space. You found God in distance, you made Him remote; you launched yourself over great abysses and chasms of space, over gulfs and valleys of distance you flew, until you touched the limit of your imagination, and there you fixed God. Like a silly bird, you flew as far as your powers might be made to go, and then

you dropped, and where you dropped, you said "God." That is your mode of thought, that the way you find God. You locate Him far off, remote. You find Him at last, but a universe lies between you and Him.

Now, before I mention a better method of finding God, allow me to remark upon the evil of your method.

The first evil is, that it tends to a misconception of God. The Deity which you find at such a distance is a mystic, fabulous Deity. He is a cloud, — a white cloud, I grant, but only a cloud. He rises up before the gazer's eye like an awful spectre, majestic only because of His size. In this cloud is power, but it is power concealed; in it is wisdom, but it is the wisdom of an oracle or a sphinx. Its lips are stone, its eyes are senseless. If this Deity should speak, His words would be the going forth of successive thunders. If He should change His locality, it would disturb the balance of the universe.

The fact is, friend, your Deity is an impossible Deity. There is no such God as your piety has pictured. Your first error is the error of localization. It is dangerous to correct conception to localize Him at all. Our faith teaches us that He is omnipresent. Let us call Him so. Who shall fix the spot of His habitation? What finger may be so audacious as to point to this or that place in

the universe, intimating by its gesture that God is to be found there? My friends, God is to be found *everywhere.* He does not abide at a fixed point, like as we do who have bodies. God is not a body; He is a spirit. He fills everything. Turn to your left; He is there. Look to your right; there, too, He is. He lives in the solid earth beneath your feet. He pervades the still ether above our heads. Ask that sunbeam where it can find God's house, and it will answer, "I am in God's house. I was born in it, I move in it, I can never get out of it."

Now, no one can pray continuously to a remote, a far-away God with any degree of delight, with any degree of affection. Love needs contact. A Deity at the centre of the universe is too far off for the human heart to appropriate. A star, however bright its beams, cannot warm a frozen man. What would you think of an artist who should paint a picture to represent friendship, in the form of two persons, one standing on one beach and the other on another, miles apart, with a sea lying between them? No artist would paint it in that way. Friendship would not be represented in such conditions. He would bring the two men together; plant them both on one beach, one standing close to the other, their hands joined in warm, earnest clasp. Well, that is just the way it is betwixt God and man. They are not far off one from the other, — God at one point, man at another, with a vast stretch of

distance lying between. God is not apart; He is brought nigh to man in Christ Jesus. When the Deity took flesh and dwelt among us, He brought the race in close contact with Him. We are brought nigh, Christian friends, by the blood of Jesus. Prayer is not sending up a petition to a far-distant being, as some province of the Roman Empire might send up a petition to the Emperor at Rome. Prayer is communion: it is friendship, sitting in the presence of friendship. Prayer is feeling: it is love lying in the bosom of love; the dependent nature seeking rest and strength from the supporting nature. Prayer is gratitude: the recipient expressing its thankfulness to the Giver. God is to the soul what a rose is to the nostrils. As it converts the common air into fragrance, so He intensifies our ordinary joys into ecstasies.

It is only when prayer means this that it is a delight. Only when God is thus interpreted does He become a source of joy to the soul. But when He is thus apprehended, when He seems always with us, when He looks out lovingly upon us from everything about us, when we see the animating spirit in the inert substance, He becomes, in very truth, a source of keen delight. Right views of God are everything in religious life, — everything for growth, especially everything for happiness. The strongest argument against piety

to-day is that it does not lead to happiness; at least, such order of happiness as human beings crave. The ordinary answer on the part of the pulpit is, that human nature is base and does not crave the right order of happiness. That is only a makeshift. It is no answer. It is a retort, not an explanation. It leads to no healthy conviction. The objector shrugs his shoulders and closes the discussion. The fact is, the response is not true. Human nature does love goodness, does delight in purity, does cling to innocence. I am speaking of it as manifested in civilized, in Christian countries. I admit an original wrong bias. I believe in human depravity as strongly as any of you. Left utterly alone by God, and men become utterly wicked. But who of us are left thus? Who of us have not been divinely acted upon? Through education, through literature, through contact with devout souls, through the very state and structure of things, the celestial force which regenerates men has been brought to bear upon us. There is no such thing among us as an original nature, a natural nature, as you see it in heathen lands. Barbarity is not born in Boston. Our children are not like flowers planted in dampness and darkness. They are like roses, bedded in the richest soil and sunny spots. The Spirit has operated on them from infancy, and they show the result in their characters. They love virtue. Obedience is not hateful

to them. Their sins are in the way of lapses, not of habit. There is in their hearts no positive antagonism to the Deity. They gladly receive instruction in the divine life.

Now, my point is, that to such, God, if properly advertised to their attention, is a source of delight. He pleases them as naturally as a landscape. His moral excellence, His inherent goodness, His tender love, find them prepared to appreciate them. But He must be properly advertised. Those excellences that childhood can understand and admire must be the ones brought to their attention.

Now, a remote Deity children cannot understand, a God of abstract qualities their minds cannot apprehend. Children get at things through the senses, not through the reason; and so you must show them the Deity in material forms if you are to teach them of Him. Now, education should be so conducted that the beauties of nature would be only the beauties of God. There should never be any distinction between the two. In loving what is lovely men and women love God. I do not love a remote Deity: my Deity is nigh. I see Him in the action of a thousand laws, in the working of numberless forces all around me. I learn of Him by the objective method, — I taste His goodness in the fruits of the earth; I sense Him in the perfume of flowers; I see Him with the eye, and hear Him with the ear; I feel Him in

my heart. Such a Deity can be delighted in; He can be loved, He can be reverenced. The pleasures of piety are natural pleasures, resulting from a proper use of enjoyable things. Religious experience is not a strained, artificial, high-wrought sensation, but that which is common to all virtue, all rectitude, and all purity.

Now, then, tell me if such a Deity is not calculated to be the source of delight. Are there not many things in the human constitution which respond to His presence and interpret it, as the sense of hearing responds to sound? Is there any reason, based upon anything existing in Him, why men and women should not come unto such a Being willingly and gladly? How pure and good and amiable he must be! How generous and benevolent and perfect in all his ways! How can such excellence go unloved? To these questions there can be but one answer. As there is nothing existing in God to account for man's hesitation, the cause must be in man himself. And this cause must exist either in man's nature or his conduct, or in both. And this is shown from the fact, that, if man's nature was constructed on right principles, if at birth it was in active harmony with goodness, then it would naturally tend toward God. The law of affinity settles such things. The fact, therefore, that man does not naturally tend toward God must be accounted for; and it

can be accounted for only on the supposition that it is because of something repellent in God or in man. That God's nature and character are adapted to attract, and not repel, I have shown; that He is calculated to be a source of delight, I have shown; that both in nature and human experience we can behold unmistakable evidence that our happiness is His joy, is beyond contradiction. I wish to allude to the testimony derived from experience more fully.

In all of us is a realm of concealed life. We speak of it to few, if any. Like Mary, we hide the sweetest things away in our hearts; we muse silently over our treasures, and ponder within ourselves their blessedness. Here in this inner life lie the springs of our motives. Here plans are born, and with them the inspiration to carry them out. Here begin those wonderful growths of affection and sentiment which enlarge and ennoble us, until we become in very fact new men and women even unto ourselves. In this inner realm of being conscience holds her council-chamber, and, all unknown to any, the small and great questions of our lives are debated and decided. This is the realm of the Spirit; the very world that God inhabits, mingling His life with ours silently, potently. When I stand before audiences as I stand before you to-day, the thought will come to me, what a wealth of experience all

these people represent; how multitudinous their thoughts, how innumerable their plans, how countless their joys, how manifold their struggles! I stand amazed before the amount of happiness one single soul can retain. Who can measure the extent of the blessedness that one heart can feel? The mother's joy, the father's pride, the lover's ecstasy, the hero's impulse, the martyr's holy aspiration, — who can fix the value of these? Who can put a measuring-cord around this inner life of man and girth it? Who can reach so high as to get the stature of it? What imagination can take it all in and gauge its blissfulness? How sweet this inner life! How precious these holy secrets of men's bosoms! How dear the brooded and brooding loves which come and make their nests in us, and keep us warm with a dear warmth which death itself cannot chill! How blessed those hopes breathed only in God's ear, and scarcely breathed to His, — hopes whose fruition defy the possibilities of this world, buds that need heaven and its perfect conditions in which to blossom! Who can estimate these? Whence come they, and by whom caused? These children with celestial faces should have heavenly influences for their parents. They do. These are the "gifts of the Spirit," to which the good Book alludes. These are the results of Divine operation in our souls; and not in ours alone, but, according to the meas-

ure of entertainment given them, in all human souls. The heathen mother bending over her first-born, with dewy eyes, her frame pervaded with a sweet ecstasy, is being "filled with the Spirit." In the birth of her babe she is brought near her own Creator. The mystery of life envelops her. She stands mutely, reverently, face to face with the great First Cause. She shall never be again quite the woman she has been. The poor born-blind creature has caught a glimpse of star and sun for a moment, and amid all her after-blindness there shall linger in her mind a memory of the glory. We must not think, as I often think some do, that God visits man only ecclesiastically, only through devout form and holy rite. The Spirit works through these, but not alone through these. For if so, what shall we say of all that inner life, of which I have spoken, where the pure and dear, sweet things of our lives are? Are not these of God? I teach you so. Yield your minds to me, and let me persuade you that God is in these. Whatever is sweetest in your hearts, in that feel Him to be. In the centre and underneath all your joys, as a king's head is underneath and in the centre of his crown, gemmed with jewels, place God. He alone is worthy to wear such a crown. Upon His head alone could you be persuaded to place it. Put it there. Let me exhort you. Bring out your dearest, sweetest, priceless things, — your

joys, your hopes, your faiths, your consecrations, your loves, which are to your heart what waters are to fountains, which if you did not have you would be heartless, — bring them all out, and say to the Lord, as the leaves of a tree say to the roots, "O Lord, these are all thine!"

It is to such a God that I ask you all to come. I am not talking to you, I am not thinking of you, as Christians, as professors of what is called religion; I am talking to you simply as human beings. I am telling you of your Creator; I am describing your God to you, your Father, your Friend; I am proving His existence, and His disposition toward you, by the blessed work He has wrought out and is working out in you: and because of His goodness, His graciousness, His ever-blessed and ever-blessing love, I urge you to come to Him. Come to Him, not in the way of intellect, in the way of creed and rule and formula, of spoken vow and public covenant, — I do not ask this of you to-night; that will come by and by, as leaves come to a tree as soon as the sap has entered into the limbs and twigs of it, — come in the way of recognition, in the way of confession, in the way of appropriation, in the way of thanksgiving. Come to Him as men after journeying come back to their native land. Heaven is our native land. We are exiles now, we are sojourners, we are pilgrims. Never forget this. Never settle

down here as if you were to stay forever, you know you will not; you know that you will move on, *will* move on! Why, we are all moving on. Can you call in the days that are passed? Can you gather in the years that are gone, and live them over again? Can you, by any wish or will or effort, stop this hour from passing? Come, then, to Him whose home is heaven, and in whose presence, if you gain it, your residence will abide forever.

You cannot doubt your reception. There was a time when men might doubt, when men could not be sure of being received; for they were guilty, and God is just, and men had reason for fear, and timidity was logical. But all this is changed. God has spoken in the person of His Son. The face of the Mighty is not veiled. The darkness that so long shrouded His eternal counsels touching man has been lifted; the brightness of His love has broken through it and scattered it. He has risen from His throne; He has sent forth his proclamation of pardon; He has put his message of love in your hands; He has sent his Spirit into your hearts; He has spoken, He has said it, and the words of his mouth are, "I would not that any should perish, but that all might come to the knowledge of the truth and live."

I have been speaking to you, friends, of God, — of His locality, of His disposition. I wish to

know more of Him; I wish to know more of Him in His relations, in His connections, in His results. I go to the Bible, and I read, "And God said, Let there be light, and light was." I go, therefore, to the morning, and say, "O morning, O gates of pearl, O clouds of amber, O mists of liquid gold, tell me of God." I read again, "The firmament showeth His handiwork." I go forth at night and lift my eyes unto the heavens, I behold His handiwork, — the dome of blue, sobered by darkness; the orbs of flame, the globes of scintillating light, the clustered radiance, the revolving glory, — and I say, "O field of matchless blue, O points of fire, and all ye beautiful creation that distinguish night, tell me of God." I read again, "And God said, Let the dry land appear," and the waters were divided and dry land was formed. I turn my eyes downward, I scoop up a handful of soil, I find a dozen distinct elements, no needed thing omitted, and I say, "O mother earth, womb of all life, out of whose dust man himself was formed, — thou parent of all production, tell me of God."

I read once more, "And God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul." I turn to my soul and question it; I call upon its faculties, its powers, its energies, and say, "O soul, child of Him of whom I long to know, tell me of that Almighty One, who only breathed upon a hand-

ful of dust and it became thyself." You see where I localize God. The ancients pictured Him as riding into sight seated in the car of the morning, whose wheels kindled into flame as they revolved. I accept their vision. I see Him thus too. The Psalmist saw Him in the sky of night. I admit the correctness of David's vision. I see Him there also. The devout men of old found Him in the high places of the earth. They always spoke of Him as a "Dweller among the hills." I have visited the hills, — their mossy dells, their ridges of ribbed rock, their never-failing fountains. I have found that the Lord still loves His ancient habitation; I have found Him among the hills. But all these did not satisfy. I craved a fuller knowledge, a more sure witness. I read of "Christ in us the hope of glory"; and here, in my own soul, my bosom for His temple, my heart His altar, my spirit His servant and His worshipper, — here in my bosom I have found my God.

SERMON X.

THE ORIGIN AND USES OF COMMERCE.

"Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth?" — ISAIAH xxiii. 8.

THIS passage reveals to us the estimation in which merchants were held in ancient time. Tyre was celebrated for her commerce. Her traders were renowned because of their wealth. The treasure they amassed gave them rank and position. They were influential and honored. Trade was not regarded in old time as a menial, but a noble pursuit. The ambitious entered into it as a means to gratify their ambition. It furnished them with a field in which to exercise their faculties and develop their powers. Subsequently the sword gave rank and power, — valor, and not ability, lifted men to thrones; but before the feudal age, in the ancient time, and among the older civilizations, "Merchants were princes, and traffickers were the honorable of the earth."

It is not difficult to ascertain the origin of commerce. It was born of men's necessities, and was characterized by the spirit of accommodation. Its birth dates back to the first family that existed on

the earth. One had what another needed, and for it he had something to give in exchange. From this mutual need sprang trade. It was a family institution, a method by which the several members of the household could benefit themselves and each other. As families increased and population multiplied, trade enlarged the circle of its operations, became more complex and multiform in its action and agents, and at length grew to be a vast system of exchange; the means of universal accommodation by which every person in the community received and bestowed benefits, and acquired the facilities of a larger and happier life. But it still kept its original significance and family spirit.

Such was the origin of trade. There was nothing selfish about it; it was not mercenary, it was benevolent and humane. Centuries later, when it had become a profession, and its agents a class among other classes, there was nothing in its parentage of which it need be ashamed, no reason why those who were engaged in it should not be called "the honorable of the earth."

If we would realize more fully yet the noble part that merchants have played in the history of the world, and the close relation that commerce has always sustained to human progress, we have only to investigate the origin of cities and consider the forces that pushed them upward in their

growth. It was trade that gave birth to our modern cities; a knot of traders beneath the walls of a castle, feeding the castle and protected by it, adding booth to booth and house to house, — so cities arose, so have they been builded. They were born of commerce and nourished by trade. The same is true to-day. Commercial facilities and commercial necessities are the forces that build our cities. New York and Boston, and every city on the continent, are daughters of trade. They represent the material forces and results of civilization. Boston is a hive, and your ships and cars are the bees that bring honey to you, bringing it from all the world. They fly everywhere, — these bees with sails and wheels for wings, — their flight girdles the earth, and the rush and roar of their going and returning fill the whole air.

Now, cities represent progress. In them you see the results of human invention and skill. Here the artist brings his canvas and the sculptor his marble. Here the loom is represented by the finest fabrics, and architecture lifts the pillars of her power. In cities oratory finds her school, and eloquence her platform; music her applause, and the poet his wreath. Every city is a record, a testimony, an advertisement. In its congregated forces and results you behold the people who built it. Study Paris, and you know the French. Bore down through the hundred strata that compose London,

and you have perforated the English character and life. New York represents America ; Boston, New England. Indeed, cities are only lenses through which we study peoples. We study Egypt in the ruins of her cities. Di Cesnola sinks a shaft in Cyprus to the depth of forty feet, and in that distance has cut through four civilizations. And all this is the work of merchants. Commerce built all these mighty cities which epitomize in their records the history of the human race. They have been the mighty factors by which God has worked out the problem of human progress.

Nor would it be well for us to overlook the use that God has made of commerce in relation to discoveries. The pioneers of civilization have been ships and traders. The race has, as it were, sailed to its triumphs. If I were to draw a symbol of human progress, I would sketch you a full, life-size portrait of a man standing on the deck of a ship ; a receding shore, thronged with cities, back of him, and the outline of a new world looming up ahead. Who are missionaries to-day ? priests only ? No ; trade is quicker than the Foreign Board. What influence opened to Western civilization the sealed ports of China ? What are those subtle forces agitating Japan to-day ? Is it religion or science that keeps Livingstone in Africa ? Whence come the means to attempt, time and again, the great Arctic expeditions ? How God is honor-

ing commerce and sanctifying the worldly ambition of men by thus using them in His blessed cause! How He is working in all these material forces, as helps in His divine plan to bring all men to the knowledge of the truth! How sweetly commerce is being wedded to piety, and trade to a humane civilization! In view of what has been said, I appeal to all of you who are merchants, to all you who are engaged in mercantile operations, and to all you who are connected as agents with trade and commerce, to remember that you belong to the most useful and honorable of pursuits. You are in the line of direct descent from men who in ancient time were called the "honorable of the earth." Your predecessors built not only the cities of the ancient world, but with those cities the various civilizations that they expressed and embodied. The ancestral habit remains with you, and to-day cities spring up at your bidding, and human progress hurries on or comes to a halt according to the degree with which you multiply or relax your efforts. Nor will this ever be otherwise. The forces you represent and the powers you employ are the permanent forces and powers of the world. More and more will ships be built and railroads constructed. The busy brain of man will multiply inventions, and wider and wider will the associations of interest become. The law of mutual benefit, which now unites men, will by and by unite

cities and nations, until the original idea shall be again realized, and commerce become only the interchange of things needed by brethren, and trade the method manifesting and supplying mutual wants.

I regard trade, therefore, as a religious institution; selfish only within those limits in which selfishness loses every base and ignoble characteristic, and exists in harmonious union with fraternal impulse. I look upon the personal gain resulting from commercial pursuits as only an accident, but in no sense representative of the great design. God never brought such a vast system of complex force into the world to minister only to the person, to the individual. The power that builds cities, makes government a necessity, begets and nurtures civilization, serves as the pioneer and then the supporter of Christianity, brings that knowledge of men to men, upon which, when perfected, as a statue upon a pedestal, the recognition of universal brotherhood shall stand,— such a force, I say, is so vast and potential in its influence that it forbids the thought that God brought it forth only to benefit the direct agents of it. No; commerce is one of those great powers in the hand of God destined to serve, enrich, and elevate, not one man in a community, not a group of men in any city, nor any particular nation, but the whole community, every city in the nation, and

every nation on the face of the earth. It is that mighty lever, having the Divine purpose for its fulcrum and the Divine hand to supply the necessary weight, by which the entire world is to be, and is in very fact being, lifted to a higher level of conception and experience.

Permit me to give this idea a certain expansion that it may be impressed the more vividly upon your minds. I submit these two propositions.

First. God's plan is to give every man what he needs, physically, mentally, spiritually.

Second. To re-establish the *family relation* among men.

In reference to the first of the two propositions I would say, that man's physical necessities are manifold, and as yet unsupplied. The physical hunger of the world has never been appeased. From the famine-stricken fields of China to the low tenements of North Street arises the moan for bread. Gaunt hunger — hunger which leads to robbery and arson, hunger that brutalizes and benumbs the generous possibilities of the heart, hunger that begets drunkenness and attempts murder, with all its concomitants of filth, rags, and vice — is actually in the world, and has its deadly clutch on the throat of thousands. All over the earth men and women will die to-night for want of bread. The shadow of this thought is black enough to darken the light before me as I speak,

as if the wing of the dark angel was passing over us on his mission of doom. To think that on this earth, where birds sing and flowers bloom and everything to the careless eye seems so happy, — to think that in our cities where so much money is accumulated, and so many comforts and luxuries are grouped, — to think that two thousand years after Christ proclaimed to the human race the principles of brotherhood, and those who believed on Him had all things in common, — to think, I say, that after all this men and women should be dying for the want of food! Alas! the old dream was false, the vision lied; for the golden age has not even yet come.

But if men's physical wants are not yet supplied, what shall we say of their mental and spiritual? If their bodies starve, how shall we estimate the starvation of their minds and souls? No statistics can assist us to comprehend the woe of that multitude whose minds are undeveloped, and whose souls are unenlightened. The number is too great, and the suffering that of a privation we cannot gauge. All we can say is, that millions on the earth are living in gross barbaric ignorance. The powers and pleasures of knowledge are unknown to them. Love, culture, religion, — these and all the joy and hope they symbolize, — they have never experienced. The use of their existence we see not, and their destiny we cannot predict.

They serve no purpose, so far as we can see; they produce no desirable result by living. Creatures of wretchedness they are born, and creatures of wretchedness they die. They swarm the earth. They puzzle the thoughtful of the world. We ponder their destiny in vain, and in sheer despair we turn from the problem that remains unsolved, and quiet the anguish of our thoughts by commending them to the infinite mercy of God, the shield of whose Fatherhood is stretched out in compassion over all.

But, friends, this wretched state of things is not to remain forever. The future must contain some amelioration, or the condition of the race would be simply unendurable to the sensitive soul. A great system of amelioration has been ordained, and is now in full operation for the deliverance and elevation of mankind. The design on the part of God is evidently to give every man what he wants. The plan includes the bestowment of everything that man needs to minister to his comfort and develop every faculty. Man is to be fed, clothed, educated, saved. This is to be done, not by making him a beneficiary, but an actor. He is to serve as an agent in that great system of benevolence by which he himself is to be blessed. He is to be fed by being taught how to feed himself. Ignorance is to give place to intelligent skill, indolence be supplanted with industry, the sluggish

are to feel the stirrings of emulation, thrift and economy inculcated, and the poor barbarian civilized by being made an agent of civilization himself. Now, I ask you to run over in your mind the means and methods by which such an amelioration can be brought about, and you will find but one power able to accomplish such a result, and that power may be described in the one comprehensive term, — commerce. In this and this alone you will find the forces and principles, the agents and agencies, able to effect such a revolution in men's minds and habits as shall lift them from the low and narrow to the high and wide plane of thought and action and intercourse.

This, then, as I understand it, is God's design in commerce. For this the vast and multiform forces of modern civilization are being evolved. It is not that individuals may be enriched, — that is only an accidental result, one of the minor consequences, — the real object on the part of God, the great result to be achieved, is and will be this: that every man on the face of the whole earth may be supplied with what he needs, in body, mind, and spirit, to the end that he may stand at last clothed in the original beauty and excellence, the likeness of which has for so many ages been lost from the earth.

All hail, then, to you who are colaborers in the fulfilment of this Divine design! Come forward

and take your place among the foremost of those who are laboring for man. In a small, narrow sense you are working for self; in a larger and wider one you are working for the race. Allow the dignity and significance of your position to enter in and possess your minds. Behold how God is working by you, and through you, for the amelioration of men the world over, and rejoice in that alliance which He has caused to exist between you and the sublime efforts of the Holy Spirit. Nothing debases a man more than a base estimate of his duty and life-work. There is a way in which a preacher of the gospel can so regard his efforts as to minister to his pride and vanity, and thus bring out the lower at the expense of the higher qualities of his mind, until his spiritual functions are all secularized and his talents prostituted to base ends. And this law applies with equal force to all professions and pursuits. The moment you disconnect them from God, the moment you sever their Divine connections, they become thoroughly base and mercenary, so that the highest form of success becomes to the maker of that success the greatest possible disaster.

I now ask your attention to the second proposition, namely, God's design in commerce is not only to supply men with what they need, but to re-establish the family relation and feeling among them.

This is to be done, also, through the instrumen-

tality of commerce. Will you please reflect a moment upon the influence and result of traffic over and above the financial result? What does trade mean? simply barter, exchange? No, it means more than this. It means exchange of ideas, communication of principles, association and acquaintance. It means a wider knowledge and juster estimate of men, the melting of prejudices, the overthrow of a false pride, the stamping out of egotism, the inculcation of a larger charity. If you study the traffic of the world, you will discover that all men are mutually dependent. The markets of Boston are our best educators. Examine the invoices at your Custom House, and you will find that we are debtors to every clime and nation for our comforts. The food we eat, the clothes we wear, the ornaments we bestow in friendly gifts, reveal to us how practical is that connection which binds us as with links of steel to a thousand other people. We learn, by even so cursory an examination, that we Americans, with all our wit and industry, do not monopolize the wisdom of the world. We realize how dependent we are on others, how the lines of exchange for mutual benefit are drawn in white around the globe. From such knowledge of our dependence on others is born esteem for them. Whoever helps us becomes in some sort a brother to us. A bond is established which needs only the passage

of time and the power of the Divine Spirit to strengthen. These, being granted, and the idea of fraternity is perceived and acknowledged. And so, using the material from which to evolve the spiritual, God is fast bringing us to that state of mind, He is educating us to that degree of apprehension, which being possessed will cause us to regard all the nations as only members of one family, and to see in every human face, black or white, the likeness of a brother. This, the recognition of universal brotherhood, is the port into which our hearts, like ships, shall at last sail. For ages men have been divided into cliques and clans, each cursing, fighting, and underrating the others; for ages barbarism, drawing the stimulus of its life from ignorance, has filled the world with hostility, and drenched the earth with blood. Like brothers who had lost the memory of each other's voices and the recollection of each other's faces, the nations have fought each other, not knowing that they were hitting brothers; but now the likeness is being perceived, and men shrink from entering into conflict with their fellow-men. And when, as I have said, you search for the cause of this fraternity, which distinguishes, beyond any other one characteristic, modern civilization, you find that trade and commerce have, beyond everything else, been the means employed of God to accomplish this blessed result.

I have now announced what is the object of commerce, and you who are engaged in those gainful pursuits which belong to it and represent it can perceive the divine design of your lives. You behold how noble is the opportunity and how sublime may be the ambition of the merchant. By the nature of his activities he is irresistibly linked with God's great plan of civilizing and elevating man. His hand is familiar with the forces that push on the world. Among the forces of benevolent action he stands so influential that his very position supplies the exhortation to consecration. The man who guards the sleep of an army must be patriotic; the nature of his duty urges him to be faithful. And so with you who are merchants: your position in the ranks of those agents and agencies designed by God to be for man's amelioration is so prominent and influential that it suggests the line of obligation and duty.

I know that, in one sense, the election is not with you. In every life is that which personal selfishness cannot direct, cannot control. The bird that sings only for his own pastime has blessed the sick child that lies in pain in the chamber beneath whose window the song was poured forth. Without knowing it, the bird has done a blessed deed. He has been unconsciously benevolent. So it is with you. No man can keep his life wholly to himself. He cannot monopolize the benevolent

influence of his activities. Like the Nile, he overflows the banks of his selfish purpose and is poured out in blessing over the whole world. We are greater than we seem to ourselves when we plan selfishly. Miserly men misuse wealth, but in the getting of it they assisted a hundred industries. It hurts them, but it blessed others. They are smaller, but a thousand other men are larger, because of their hoarded treasure. Every man, therefore, that plans or works, invents or executes, does indirectly assist mankind. Selfishness, so wisely has God ordered things, becomes generous in spite of itself.

But, friends, such indirect, involuntary benevolence does not fulfil our obligations or dignify our calling. There is a law resting upon us all to benefit men directly and with personal consecration. Our duty is to so live as to not only better others, but to better ourselves and ennoble our calling. What we do should be so done as to incline us to do noble things. A deed which, being done, leaves the doer no better than before it was done should never be done at all. Every day should fit us for heaven by as much as it brings us nearer heaven.

Now, the danger is that the young men in this city who are just entering into business life will put a base estimate upon trade, will look upon it only as the means of amassing wealth. The age is materialistic, and hence the value of money is greatly

exaggerated. Money can buy many things you need; but there are things you need, friends, which money cannot buy, no matter how much of it you have. It can buy food and clothes, books and culture, social position and a certain low order of power. It carries with it a gross kind of influence. But it cannot buy you integrity, nor virtue, nor true refinement. It cannot buy you love, nor domestic happiness, nor peace of mind, nor generous thoughts while living, nor calm and happy thoughts when dying. It will buy you the fear and flattery of those base as yourselves, but it can never buy for you the respect of the just nor the admiration of the good. The annals of your city are not poor in names held in high esteem. But the names of those merchants that Boston honors are the names of men who were not merely rich, but also good. The Lawrences, the Abbotts, the Quincys, the Gores, were rich in character as well as in money. It would be grossly unjust to measure them by the monetary standard. I seem to see these noble men and their companions in greatness standing before me in the light of that eternal world into which they have passed, disconnected from their former earthly wealth, separate from the accidental honors of their mortal life, and I praise God that, seeing them thus, they still seem great, and worthy of that applause and admiration which we have been accustomed to give them.

Nor would it be an exaggerated expression of my feelings should I invoke the spirits of these men who did so much for the honor and prosperity of Boston to still abide in the city of their love, and animate you who are building the superstructure, the foundation of which they laid, with the same exalted spirit which in their day and generation distinguished them. And this I say, that if you, the merchants of this city, should unfortunately yield yourselves to the enticements of mercenary considerations, and become ambitious only to acquire wealth; if you should ignore the close connection of your calling with God's design to benefit men, and live only to amass that order of wealth which rust corrupts and thieves steal, then would you not only be living in disobedience to God's command, but also at variance with the early traditions of your own class and city. I beseech you, one and all, not to commit so suicidal an act. Remember that you type and control the future. The clay is not more subject to the moulder's hand than is the character of your successors to your influence. In mercantile character there are no sudden changes, no swift transitions from one form of conduct to another. The sons will act as the father, and the clerk, when he has become a partner, be as the head of the firm is to-day. If you are open and above-board in all your dealings, high-toned and strictly honest, benevolent and

humane, so will your son be when you have passed to your reward, and he in turn occupies your present position. If, on the other hand, you are tricky and basely cunning in your way of doing business; if you cheat every one, including the government, of all you can with safety; if, fired with the desire for sudden wealth, you push into strange and questionable enterprises, and adopt a flashy, high-pressure style of doing business, — then you are undermining the virtue of your clerks, introducing a false standard of success, and sowing seed that will surely produce a crop of thieves, forgers, and signers of false invoices thirty years from to-day. Exceptions there may be, but this is the law. Honorable merchants there will be then as now, even as the sons of some drunkards remain temperate; but they were nevertheless educated in a vicious school, and that large mass, found in every community, who are upheld by no deep religious conviction, but subject to the predominating influence, will catch the contagion of your evil example and repeat your faults and vices in even larger proportions. I appeal unto you, therefore, merchants of Boston, in the name of that future over which you hold such sovereignty and whose character will take shape and color from yours, — I appeal unto you in the name of all your clerks who are subject day by day to the influence of your position and example, and who, being pupils in a

school of which you are teacher and head, are being taught by you the lessons of virtue and honor or of trickery and baseness, — I appeal to you in the name of the city of which you are so justly proud, and whose honor is intrusted to your keeping, — and lastly, I appeal to you in the name of that Divine love and mercy to man whose servants and agents you are or should be, — to do only those things which, being known, would give you honor among men, and which, when revealed, as they surely will be at the last great day, will enable you to stand blameless before God. And wherein any of you have done other than this, as some of you may, — for temptation is common to men, and it is human to err, — repent and change your conduct, lest you lead others also into wickedness, and a worse thing fall upon you.

SERMON XI.

WHY THE RELIGION OF NEW ENGLAND HAS FAILED TO CONVERT THE PEOPLE.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." — ROMANS x. 1.

THE gravest problem that we can consider to-day is this, Why does Christianity fail to convert the people? How is it that here in New England, with tradition and custom in its favor, and among a people peculiarly given to religious impressions, religion is professed by comparatively so few? You may go into any New England village, and you will find that the majority of the professional and business men are non-professors, and connected with none of the many local churches in the place. And not only is this true touching the middle-aged, but it is equally, if not more, true in the case of the young men of the town. And this I regard as true, and capable of being proven by actual canvass, that religion, as it is now being proclaimed from the pulpits, and advertised by the church machinery of the country, is not winning to itself, to any such degree as it should and might be expected to do, the professional and business men of the country. You may

go into any church in this city and make the proper inquiries, and you will soon discover that in the congregation are scores of men from twenty to sixty years of age who do not belong to the church, and are apparently unaffected by the preaching of the gospel. The pulpit seems to have no persuasive, efficient influence upon them. They listen with courtesy to what the preacher has to say, hear him go through, week after week, his formal theological statements of what is necessary to salvation with patient indifference or good-natured incredulity, and that is all. They take no step forward. They are no nearer being Christians, in the technical sense of the phrase, at the end of the sermon or of the year, than they were at the beginning.

Now, friends, I, for one, wish to understand this matter. I wish to know how such a state of things has arisen, and what perpetuates it. How is it that so many men, who, by reason of their position and ability, should be in actual and active connection with the religious forces of the land, are not? Is the cause of this failure to convert them to be found in religion itself, in the mode and spirit of proclaiming it, or in the extraordinary hardness of their hearts? Does the fault lie at the door of those who hear, or of those who preach? What, in a word, is the reason why these men are not converted?

Well, friends, I will give you, so far as I can in one address, my views upon this perplexing problem. I do not know that my views will agree with yours. On such a question difference of opinion is to be expected. I may not be right in my own conclusion. I only hope to start the discussion, not end it. The question is so grave and portentous in its character that it challenges debate and forbids silence. The preacher who timidly confines himself to amiable routine utterances, and steers safely clear of questions like this, is an incapable, or untrue to the Master's service. The pulpit that does not critically examine the causes of its own weakness and inefficiency is too ignorant to know its duty, or too cowardly to do it.

The fact, then, which we are to account for is this, that religion has failed, and is to-day failing, in New England and the country at large, to win over into heart alliance with itself a large part of our population. This no one can deny. Put the records of church membership over against your census reports, and you will behold at once the truth of the proposition. In the light of such a comparison you will perceive the awful magnitude of that failure which attends the present administration of religion in the country.

Please to note the character and extent of the failure. If it were only a numerical failure, it were well; for numbers do not always represent

power. But it is a failure in respect to quality as truly as of quantity. The men of whom I am speaking as unconnected with the churches and apparently unreached by the pulpits, are men of influence. They are wealthy, they are energetic, they are learned, they are refined. They represent the influence associated with money, capacity, knowledge, and culture. They type and embody, not only the grosser, but the higher forces which to-day are operant for good and evil in American society. Among them are to be found the warmest hearts, the finest minds, and choicest spirits among us. Among them, also, are to be found many of the most energetic and promising young men of the land. If the Church of Christ loses these, she loses the nutrition from which she must derive those supplies of new blood without which her vital current will be perilously thin and her veins withered. Without these she surrenders the hope and promise of future expansion and greatness.

You will observe, also, as you study this subject, that these unconverted men and women are not hardened and excessively wicked. Their hearts are not antagonistic to religion beyond the average disinclination of spiritual things common to all. They are not irreverently sceptical; they are not profane; they are not bitterly perverse. They are humane, generous, reverent, open to argument

and spiritual persuasion. It is easy for the minister and deacons to call them "gospel-hardened." That is a quick, and, I fear, the usual method of solving the whole problem, and dismissing from our consciences the ugly question. But the assertion or conclusion is not true. They are not "gospel-hardened." They are not given over of the Divine Spirit. They lead moral lives. They have religious sensibilities. They often set a worthy example to professors themselves. And so the kingly possibility of gaining them to Christ, which we had stabbed with this cruel assertion, comes back to mar our feasting, and push our easy, self-satisfied complacency from its stool. It will not "down at our bidding." And the question returns in all its weight and solemn significance, "Why are these men and women not converted?"

Now, one reason, as I understand the matter, why religion has not been more successful in gaining disciples among the class I have mentioned, is because it has been associated with cant and formalism. By formalism I mean a piety of form, a routine observance of religious duty, an outward ceremonial expression of devotion. As illustrative of this may be instanced formal and repetitious prayers by the laity and ministers both, hackneyed exhortation, and the periodical anxiety for souls which distinguishes many churches. Cant is more difficult to describe, as it may be more wicked in

spirit. It may be unconscious, in which case it is innocent in the person using it, but none the less mischievous in its influence on others. It may, on the other hand, be conscious, in which case it is hypocritical and thoroughly base. In one form or the other it exists in New England to an alarming extent. You will find it in pulpit and pew, in prayer-meetings and conference-rooms, and especially in boards appointed by the churches to examine candidates of church membership. Such assumed solemnity of face and voice, such studied efforts after the unnatural in tone and bearing, such overwhelming anxiety for souls, — which, if real, would break the heart that feels it, but which is nevertheless carried without loss of appetite or sleep, — such devotional stupidity and pious ignorance, as are manifested by many professors of religion in our churches, is enough to sharpen the edge of satire against it and disgust the manly. You can put the mantle of heaven upon the shoulders of bigotry and call it orthodoxy if you please, but I warn you that the masses will denounce it if you do. The humane and charitable element, I observe, lives ; but bigotry leads a wolf's life, and civilization, as it advances, is forever pushing it back into the recesses of barbaric existence. You can, if you please, put men into office in your churches who will go on for twenty years making the same prayer, and that, too, when it was never

good enough to be made at all; but you do it at the risk of making your prayer-meeting an experience of pain and mortification to the intelligent, and of making religion, in the person of your ignorant deacon, a laughing-stock to the village. And no greater blunder can be made by the churches than to so conduct their administrations as to become the butt against which every wit in the village shall direct his arrow. When religion is so advertised in a town as to be laughed at, you may despair of its success in that town. The forces against it for the time being are stronger than the forces in its favor.

In addition to this conscious or unconscious formalism in our churches, whose influence is most disastrous, there has been also not a little hypocritical cant. A most exaggerated and unnatural kind of piety has been in vogue. Vanity and pride have masked themselves behind the veil of meekness and lowliness of spirit, and the veil has been too thin to conceal the cunning back of it. Their prayers were better than their lives, and men saw it and were indignant at the fraud put upon their credulity. In the vestry the man was an extraordinary saint; in the transaction of his business he was an ordinary sinner. Men knew that he was more or less a hypocrite, — that he had two faces and two sets of tones in his voice which he could use at will. They knew he was

not one half as good as he pretended to be, and yet they saw him honored by the church with an election to the deaconship, and looked up to as a leader of the revival. The church put him forward as the best illustration of its piety, and the community, who had no faith in the man, soon grew to have no faith in the church or the piety it represented. And so the years passed, and two thirds of a generation went into their graves unconverted, their possible influence wasted; and the connection which should be continuous between the church and each successive generation was broken.

But there is another reason why so many men and women in New England and the country remain unconverted, besides those we have already mentioned, and it is this: the preachers have preached, not the gospel in all its sweet tenderness and vital adaptation to the average man's every-day life, but a theology *inferred* from the gospel through the Epistles of Paul; and in doing this employed a terminology of definition and vocabulary of expression neither understood nor relished by the masses. In respect to the gospel, by which I mean the simple, easily understood words of Him who "spake as never man spake," as contrasted with the Epistles of Paul, from which we have derived our systematic theology, I do not wish to suggest any essential antagonism between

the two, nor intimate that Paul's theology was not legitimately derived from the teachings of the Master. I am speaking touching the mode of teaching the Divine truths, not endeavoring to estimate the degrees of inherent excellence between various portions of the Bible; and, so speaking, I declare my conviction that for the practical purposes of the preacher no Epistle of Paul or of any other Apostle can stand a moment's comparison with the words of Jesus himself. Paul was a scholar, but Jesus was a Saviour. The one spoke through the medium of a human intelligence, assisted by the Divine Spirit to an extent to insure honesty of purpose and partial illumination of mind in respect to the great truths he strove to systematize. The other spoke from the full, overflowing depths of Divine Consciousness itself, and with the directness and inclusiveness of one who was both author and chief agent of the scheme of redemption He embodied. He who reads Paul often reads mystery; but the words of the Saviour are invariably plain and easily understood. The path of theological discussion is often crooked and blind, it is less a road than a labyrinth; and many minds have groped vainly for the clew which might lead them from the bewildering mazes into the clear light of truth, groped and found not, and died at last in the exquisite torture of that bewilderment which forbids peace and hope to the

departing soul. But the path pointed out by Christ in the Gospels is across a level country, flooded with the clear sunlight, and so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.

It is this world-wide difference between Paul and Jesus, between an inferred theology and simple direct statement from the mouth of God Himself, which supplies to all preachers the true rule and spirit of preaching. Were I to begin my ministerial life again, I would begin and end my preparation to preach the gospel with the Gospels. The words of Jesus, and not of Paul, should receive my prolonged and devout attention. I would be a pupil of the Master, and not of the man. For in the actual utterances of the Saviour, beyond doubt, we can find not alone all that is essential to the salvation but also to the edification of the soul in the divine life. Not only what He said, but how He said it, should command my attention. I would fit myself for the pulpit by a study of the manner as well as the matter of Christ's discourses. For I know not that book in which can be found statement so clear, argument so unanswerable, appeal so tender, warning so pathetic, denunciation so sublimely fierce, and satire so keenly edged, as in the gospel narrative of the Saviour's speeches and conversations. Every word He ever uttered of which we have record should be memorized by me, with the local circumstances

and connection of the same. In imagination I would preach to His audiences as He preached to them. I would, as nearly as it is in my power, become like Him in spirit and in method, to the end and in the blessed hope that when I came to stand before tempted, sinful, and dying men, something of my great Exemplar's likeness might be seen in and shine out from me.

I am confident, — and I believe it to be the concurrent opinion of thoughtful men everywhere, — I am confident, I say, that we need less of Paul and more of Jesus in our pulpits and prayer-meetings. Not Jesus as interpreted in the way of cant and superficial, pious sentimentalism, but as interpreted in the way of charity, humanity, and compassion, — Jesus, the Saviour of the world, the brother of men, the helper of the weak, the great, unchangeable, divine source of compassion and love, and not as the centre of a mere theology or patron of an ecclesiasticism, — is what New England needs and what New England is hungering and thirsting for.

The people are wearied with the proclamation of the gospel in theologic form. They tire of set terms and phrases. The old Calvinistic terminology and vocabulary they do not understand nor care for. The sermon does not affect them. It does not stir them. There is no application to it. It is like the touch of a palm that has no bone in

it; a good sort of a hand enough, but there is no grip to it. What men need is something they can understand and feel the force of, —an interpretation of God that makes Him real and tangible to their minds and hearts, and presents their duty in such a light that it shall appear reasonable. Whatever is artificial or exaggerated in manner and statement, whatever seems above the range of reason and common-sense, they do not understand, or if they do understand they resent. This also is observable, that men accustomed to deal with affairs in a practical way, and who have been taught pliancy and toleration by their daily contact with people of many countries and dissimilar opinions, are offended at exhibitions of bigotry and mental littleness. A theology that seems the theology of only a sect or denomination they naturally suspect. They cannot give assent to what seems inadequate to express the Divine Being. If the Deity is to be defined at all, then must a definition be given to Him large and luminous enough to express the sphered glory of His attributes. A narrow conception of God they reject, and the man who makes it can never be intrusted by them with the leadership of their souls. This leads me to say, that the matter of written creeds has much to do with the subject we are discussing.

There are some that say that New England rejects creeds, that the people resent such inter-

ference with their liberty of thought, and that those who believe in written statements of belief are fighting against the spirit of the age. Now this "spirit of the age" argument is a very handy one, and such phrases as "liberty of thought" and "resenting the idea of a creed" sound well when declaimed before a popular audience in a certain dramatic tone of voice and accompanied with a certain imperiousness of gesture; but I look upon it as a specimen of ignorance touching what is the real spirit of the age and the drift of public opinion in New England, or an example of what might be called cunning elocution. I take no stock, as men of business say, in that sort of declamation. The true analysis of the New England character, as I understand it, is this. In it, in the first place, is a broad streak of intense radicalism. The New-Englander is inquisitive touching everything, including religion. He is not stupidly reverent. He can imitate, but no imitation can exhaust the forces of his nature. He is so capable that he must be original. In temperament he is sanguine and impatient. He is more dangerous tied up than he is let loose. Give him room in which to exercise to his heart's content and to occasionally indulge in his antics, and you are safe; for then he is the most useful and harmless of beings. But he needs a prairie for his playground and a Niagara for his water-power.

Now, such a being will not be lashed and carded down to one position. He will not endure dictation, and cannot understand stagnation. To him motion is life, and his idea of heaven a prolonged and glorious flight. Progress, development, improvement on the old, evolution, by which the small shall become great and the narrow wide, — these, put in flesh and blood, and living in a climate charged with vital and vitalizing elements, compose and illustrate my idea of a New England man.

But lying closely alongside of this radicalism of impulse, and overlapping it, you will observe in every well-constructed New England mind a conservatism which acts as a brake upon the flying wheels of his thoughts and keeps them under control. This conservative element in our character crops out in everything, and either prevents revolution or checks it before it has gone beyond the point of safety. The strength of this characteristic can be gauged approximately in the slowness with which we accept ideas that include a radical change in the mode and fashion of our living, or the structure of our government.

In proof of this, I might point you to the history of reforms in this country, and ask you to observe how slowly they advanced to their triumph. They had to beat their way up against wind and tide. Take the adoption of the Constitution by

the several States as an illustration. How long the scales hung in even balance! And it was doubtful whether we should ever be a nation or not, and a third of the nation to-day believe in local independence, State sovereignty, as opposed to national authority. Observe the conservatism manifested in the antislavery contest. I admit that selfish and mercenary motives strengthened it, but, independent of these, there was a mighty conservative force against any agitation or change that should imperil the Union. Take again the Unitarian revolt against the theology of the ancients. Wonderfully fortunate in its leaders as it was, capturing at one dash the intellectual centre of New England and the country; bulwarked as it was behind the culture of Boston on the one hand and the renown of Harvard on the other; marvellously assisted as it was, also, by the bigotry and dogmatism of orthodoxy, — still, in spite of all these accidental and local advantages, the innovation on the old ideas, far from sweeping over New England, not only did not pass to any considerable extent beyond the boundary of the State, but did not even succeed in carrying the city itself. In addition to these, as a final and crowning illustration of New England conservatism, might be instanced the "woman's movement," as it is called, — a movement so just and reasonable in its claims, when separated from its unfortunate entanglements, that lit-

erally no argument can be brought against it, — held in check for the most part by the conservatism of New England character and the people's inbred fear of change.

Now, friends, I have this to say: that any one who supposes that a people so circumspect and conservative, so fixed and settled in their opinions, and so positive in their convictions, as we are, fear creeds, are frightened at exact definition, or resent carefully formed statements of principles, must be startlingly ignorant of the character of the people to whom he would fain become a leader, and of the "spirit of the age," of which he so oracularly discusses. I dare to say that, instead of disliking positiveness of statement in religious matters, people desire and demand it, and that neither in religion nor politics can any party make progress in America that does not put before the people a clear, explicit statement of its belief and purposes. It is the church without such a statement, and not the one with it, that will find it difficult to maintain its hold upon the minds and hearts of the masses.

But in spite of all this, recognizing the value and necessity of creeds, written statements of belief, nevertheless I believe that they constitute one of the reasons why many of the most talented and influential men and women in New England are not converted and led to make a public profession of religion.

In many of our evangelical churches the creed is so inclusive of details in doctrine and scriptural interpretation, and so exacting and arbitrary in its terminology, that no independent and partially informed mind can honestly, at that point of spiritual understanding and development at which people stand when coming before the committee of conference, give unqualified assent to it. In addition to this obstacle, the ruling spirit of the committee is often an over-earnest or bigoted man, who has no doubt but that the whole universe of truth is enclosed within the sweep of his own little pair of compasses, and who feels that he is placed at the gate of heaven, — namely, his little church, — to protect it from the entrance of unworthy applicants. The conference, therefore, often becomes only an examination, and an examination, too, conducted in such a manner as to become inquisitorial and hence offensive; and an impression is allowed to go forth of a character that proves a stumbling-block to the timid, and not to these alone, but to all who hold themselves superior in things of the soul to human dictation, and especially the dictation of narrow-minded men.

This I regard as a fair statement of the question, and an accurate description of the state of things in New England. Our theology is too formal, and our preaching of it too commonplace. Our creeds, while right and proper in their statement of the

great essentials of Christianity, are carried too far into details and too arbitrarily applied to the individual judgment. Our committees of conference become as a rule committees of inquisitorial examination, and fall into the hands of men who have thought too little themselves to appreciate the difficulties and agonies of those with more active minds. And in these respects, so far as the practice and facts sustain the statement, our orthodox churches are beyond doubt in opposition to the spirit of the age and out of harmony with the people. And it behooves us all to look to it that what is wrong in our management of spiritual forces should be remedied, and what is weak strengthened.

If you would allow me one other suggestion in the same line of thought, I would say that another reason why many are not converted is to be found in the weakness of the pulpit. I think it beyond dispute that the pulpit of New England to-day is a weak pulpit, — weak in powers of statement and oratorical efficiency. I grant it the possession of piety, but it seems to be largely lacking in ability. And this state of things has arisen from two causes: first, from the entrance into the ministerial profession of men who, neither by natural ability nor fitness for the profession, have a right to be in it; and, secondly, because many of those who are by nature capable are too indolent to enlarge their native capacity and improve their gifts. I know

the severity of this charge, and I bring it only because of a sincere feeling that I speak the simple truth, and of a knowledge based upon a wide and thorough study of the subject. In no profession are there such rewards for activity, or such temptations and opportunity for laziness and shirking, as in the ministry. The punishment for the lawyer who neglects his client's cause is swift and sure; the physician who commits a malpractice is severely dealt with; the lyceum lecturer who brings a weak production to the platform is deserted by the people: but a minister, by cunningly arranged exchanges and use of old sermons, can lead an indolent life for years and not be detected in a way to reform his habits or dismiss him from the profession and service he has disgraced and trifled with. I believe that there are before me to-night hundreds of business men, including these reporters here, who work two hours where the average New England clergyman works one. I notice that all men in business and professional life who have amassed wealth or attained honor are great workers for the first ten or twenty years of their career. They have to be. That is the rule and the only method of success.

In order to make our pulpits strong, then, that they may be influential among the influential and command the respect of the capable and refined, I do not hesitate to say that our young men must

work longer and harder than they are doing. They need more study-work. They must think more, pen in hand. They must ponder the Word of God in their hearts, and in the silence of the night, when other men sleep and the house is hushed, muse and reflect on the sources of spiritual power. They had better, at this stage of our intellectual and spiritual development, neglect everything else than their sermons, because it is evident that in this country and in our day public speech, combined with the press, is the most direct and potential means to reach the hearts and consciences of men. With weakness in our pulpits, we shall have indifference or scepticism in the pews, a public neglect of the sanctuary and disregard of the Sabbath, and a population able to vote their impiety and looseness of morals into statute, lacking the first element of true greatness, which is reverence for the Deity.

And now, friends, before I close this the last sermon I shall preach to you from this platform, permit me to declare my unalterable conviction that the Bible is a revelation from God touching the way we should live in this life and the way we can be saved from the penalty of our sinfulness on earth in the world to come. To me the Scriptures become dearer as the years pass, and the Saviour published to my knowledge therein more and more the hope of my soul. The mercy of God rises on

me like the light of morning on the earth. My heart receives it as the earth receives the solar beam. It delivers me from the bondage of darkness, and stirs me with a vital warmth. With simple, earnest phrase, unadorned with the graces of eloquent speech, with nothing but the honesty of the effort to recommend it, I urge you to accept the offer of pardon of all your sins contained in the gospel.

Of theology, technically considered, I do not speak. Our intellectual differences shall be laid aside until with clearer vision we behold the truth in all its relations in the world to come. I imagine that many who fought each other here and lost their spiritual brotherhood in bitter debate have found a common platform and joined hands in an everlasting compact before the Throne of God. Of our imperfect lives, of talents buried, of opportunities neglected, of sins committed, of sonship with God forfeited by our ungrateful conduct, of persistence in evil courses when the right was made plain, of inward repentance and longings felt in common for something better than we have yet attained, — of these I speak, a brother among brothers, a sinful man among sinful men; and I say that "our sins, though they be as crimson, shall become white as wool; though they be like scarlet, they shall be as snow." I do not suppose that in the intricate and changeful courses of this life it will be permitted unto all of us who are

here to-night to meet again. We shall go our several ways and along paths widely apart, and at different periods of time make our exit from this world. I invoke, therefore, the Almighty Being, who brought us into this life and has sustained us in mercy up to this hour, to abide with us unto the end. I invoke Him to bestow upon us the needful measure of grace that shall incline us to repentance of our sins and faith in His blessed Son, and to administer unto us all, at our departure from the earth, an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

THE END.

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